

This document contains guidance on the identification and placement process for 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, please contact:

Student Access and Opportunity
mde.el@state.mn.us
(651) 582-8579

Statewide Testing
mde.testing@state.mn.us
(651) 582-8674

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
<p>Prioritizing In-Person Learning for Multilingual Learners</p>	<p>We want to recognize and applaud the amazing efforts of educators to structure meaningful and consistent language development opportunities for multilingual learners. Instruction and support throughout the school day should be grounded in the 2020 WIDA ELD Standards Framework. We strongly recommend that multilingual learners in virtual academies receive in-person ELD instruction at least once a week.</p> <p>We look forward to collaborating with you to support your important work as you engage with multilingual learners and families.</p> <p>Initial identification of a student as an English Learner (EL) and parent notification must occur not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, or within two weeks of initial enrollment if not enrolled at the beginning of the school year.</p> <p>An EL parent notification letter must be sent to parents (in a language they understand) within 30 days of enrollment in the English Language Development (ELD)/Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) program. Translations of the EL parent notification letters are available by logging in for free at the TransACT Parent Notices Portal. If you have trouble logging in or cannot find the document you need, contact support@transact.com.</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

Students without 2024 ACCESS or Alt ACCESS Scores

- Consider what tools and data are already available locally to inform instruction and placement, such as: formative language assessment data; teacher observations of language use; common language assessments; interim language assessments (including WIDA MODEL); conversations with content teachers regarding language use and academic progress; or other local language proficiency data. *The USDE has indicated that ESSER COVID relief funds may be used for these purposes.*
- The USDE has stated that a state's ELP screener may be used to inform ongoing ELD placement and ELD instruction, however, an ELP screener may **not** be used to make exit decisions. The USDE requires that the state's annual ELP assessment (ACCESS) be one of the required elements states use to determine ELD program exit and reclassification of EL status in MARSS/Ed-Fi.

For ongoing updates regarding EL programming and support in 2024-25, please [Subscribe to the MDE English Learner Education Newsletter](#) and visit the [MDE EL Education Page](#) for the most current information. We also invite you to join our webinars for EL program coordinators. These are typically scheduled during the school year on the first Wednesday of each month from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm. Registration and details will be posted to the [MDE Calendar](#).

District and charter school staff in Minnesota can reach out to the following contacts with specific questions:

- MDE EL Programs for information on eligibility and exiting, ELP screening, EL programming, professional development, and WIDA eLearning courses: mde.el@state.mn.us
- WIDA Client Services for questions about training materials, test administration procedures, classroom resources, or problems with your WIDA Secure Portal account: 866-276-7735; help@wida.us
- MDE Statewide Testing for testing policies and procedures for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS: mde.testing@state.mn.us
- For student data reporting or financial questions, please contact staff in the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) at marss@state.mn.us.
- For questions about publicly reported data or the MDE Secure Reports, please contact staff in Data and Analytics at mde.analytics@state.mn.us.

Initial Assessment and Identification

Process Overview

- 1) The Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) must be completed by a parent or guardian for all new students enrolling in a Minnesota public school. Translations of the MNLS are available for free at the [TransACT Parent Notices Portal](#).

The former site at TransAct.com has been retired. K-12 education staff needing an account with the new platform should send a request via e-mail to support@transact.com.
- 2) If any of the parent statements on the MNLS are “languages other than English” or “English and other languages other than English”, the age-appropriate Minnesota screener (WIDA Screener) must be administered. See [Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures – Identifying Students as English Learners Using the WIDA Online or Paper Screener](#) for additional information.
- 3) However, in some cases, if a parent has marked that the student first learned only English, speaks only English and understands only English but has marked the statement “my student has consistent interaction in a language other than English”, the district should adopt one of the following policy options:
 - a) The district could choose to screen ALL students. In making this decision, the district understands that this policy option could lead to cases of false positives (which districts should attempt to identify and correct as soon as possible); or
 - b) In this unique situation in which only item #4 on the MNLS indicates a language other than English, district staff will talk with parents, to learn more about the non-English interaction of the student. If it is determined that the primary home language is English, the student will not complete an ELP screener, and a brief note is entered on the MNLS indicating the reason for not screening the student for English language proficiency. This policy option could lead to cases of false negatives (which the district is obligated to identify and correct as soon as possible).

Screening decision documentation should be maintained in student cumulative folders.
- 4) Results of the screener assessment will indicate whether the student is identified as an English learner (EL). Students with EL status must receive regular ELD instruction from a licensed ESL teacher as well as timely access to grade level content instruction (with instructional support to allow for the meaningful participation of multilingual learners at varying proficiency levels in English).

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	<p>5) Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) should be identified in the student support data collection (SSDC) system and EDIAM/Ed-Fi. For the definition of SLIFE and information on reporting, please visit MDE’s SLIFE page</p> <p>6) Districts and charter schools will also finalize student eligibility for the Title III Immigrant Children and Youth Grant each year by June 1 each year.</p> <p>For additional information on Immigrant Grant and SLIFE reporting, please see the MDE Student Support Data Collection Page.</p>
Timelines	<p>Initial identification of a student as an EL and parent notification must occur not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, or within two weeks of initial enrollment if not enrolled at the beginning of the school year.</p> <p>See Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures – English Language Development Program Entrance and Continuing English Learner Eligibility for more information.</p>
Home Language Survey	<p>Minnesota has a statewide language survey that must be used as part of the regular enrollment process with all families in all public schools and districts.</p> <p>A parent or guardian must complete the Minnesota Language Survey (MNL) upon initial enrollment in public school. The MNL is kept in the student’s cumulative file, to be transferred as part of a student’s records to another district, if necessary.</p> <p>Districts should follow the Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures- The Minnesota Language Survey for administration of the MNL.</p> <p>If any of the statements are “languages other than English” or “English and other languages other than English”, the age-appropriate Minnesota screener must be administered to the student. See Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures – Identifying Students as English Learners Using the WIDA Online or Paper Screener for additional information.</p>

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	<p>The MNLS must remain in the student’s permanent record. Only one MNLS is to be on file for the student and it should be from initial enrollment. The MNLS is required in K-12 settings and in Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness Plus programs. <i>Its use is strongly recommended in all other early learning settings. While an MNLS completed in early learning settings can be used for Kindergarten enrollment, students must take the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten even if they were identified for EL status in early learning settings using another ELP screener.</i></p>
<p>State Approved Assessments</p>	<p>The state approved English language proficiency screeners in Minnesota are:</p> <p>Early Learning Settings: Required in state funded Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness Plus programs (strongly recommended in all other early learning programs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-LAS Observational and Assessment System (DRC) • Pre-IPT Oral Test 3-5 (Ballard and Tighe) <p>For more details, see the Special Cases section of Screening for English Language Proficiency and Multilingual Learners in Early Learning Programs.</p> <p>Kindergarten (first semester only): In the first semester of Kindergarten, use only the listening and speaking domains of the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten.</p> <p>Second Semester Kindergarten (after January 1) and First Semester of Grade 1: Use all four domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing) of the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten. <i>Beginning in the second semester of grade 1 use the grade 1 test.</i></p> <p>For more details about this, visit the MDE EL Support Webpage.</p> <p>If you are administering the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten to students prior to their enrollment in kindergarten, the earliest recommended test administration is mid-April.</p> <p>Grades 1-12: WIDA Screener Online and Paper</p> <p>Students with Identified or Unidentified Disabilities: Consult with special education staff who are familiar with the child’s IEP to determine if accommodations should be used for the screener as appropriate. Accommodations available on ACCESS (per student IEPs) are also available for the WIDA Screener if these are identified in the child’s IEP.</p>

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	<p>Non-WIDA assessments are not among the approved ELP screeners in MN for grades K-12. However, in special cases in which in-person ELP screening is not possible for a student enrolled in your district's online learning academy, the K-12 LAS Links Online screener may be purchased locally and used as a formal, remote ELP screening option in these special cases. This option is under review and may not be available in the future. Districts are strongly encouraged to use this as a last resort for special cases in which a student or family faces extreme hardship to come to a school building, or refuses to come to the building for any reason.</p>
<p>Paper Based Screener Costs</p>	<p>If the district decides to use the optional WIDA Screener Paper (grades 1-12) it can be purchased for a nominal fee at the WIDA Store.</p>
<p>Identification/Placement Criteria</p>	<p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten WIDA certified test administrators can administer the ELP screener as early as April 15 of each year.</p> <p>First Semester: At the start of kindergarten, students who are not yet reading and writing at a second-semester of kindergarten level, should take only the listening and speaking domains. Most students will only take the listening and speaking tests.</p> <p>Identification Criteria:</p> <p>First Semester: An oral composite score of 4.5 or higher (if taking only the listening and speaking tests) An overall composite score of 4.5 or higher (if taking all four domain tests)</p> <p>Second Semester (and first semester of grade 1) An overall composite score of 4.5 or higher (test must include all four domains)</p> <p>Progress Monitoring to Correct Cases of Potential Misidentification We strongly recommend an all-domain rescreening in 2nd semester of Kindergarten (on or after January 1) for students initially identified as proficient (with only the listening and speaking tests) if they are showing any evidence of needing ELD instruction to fully access grade-level instruction and standards as the year progresses.</p>

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	<p>Grades 1-12: WIDA Screener Online: Overall Composite score of 4.5 with no domains below a 4.0 Paper: Overall Composite score of 4.5 with no domains below a 4.0</p> <p>For Minnesota Proficiency Criteria, also see MDE English Learner Support</p>
<p>Other Useful Resources or Information</p>	<p>Parent Notification: Local education agencies (LEAs) participating in the Title III program are required to notify parents of their student's participation in Title III programming...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually • Within 30 days of the beginning of the school year. • Or within two weeks if the child enters the district during the course of the year. <p>Information required with this notification includes the most recent English language proficiency assessments. Parent notification is available through new TransACT website at: minnesota-doe.parentnotices.com</p> <p>Please email TransAct directly if you need help creating a personal TransAct account: support@transact.com</p> <p>MARSS/Ed-Fi Data Elements: For all students who are identified as having a language other than English on the MNLS and after having been assessed with the age-appropriate screener and are identified as an EL, districts must complete the required data elements: Home primary language and EL Indicator. Once a student is receiving ELD instruction, the third data element: start date must be included for MARSS reporting.</p> <p>Recently Arrived English Learners: RAELs participate in state academic assessments (including the MCA Reading test) and the annual ACCESS test.</p> <p>RAEL identification: Recently Arrived English Learners</p> <p>RAEL reporting in SSDC: Student Support Data Collection</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

	<p>The Minnesota Department of Education English Learner Education website contains specific information on the identification, entrance and exit of English Learners.</p>
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Test Administrator Training and Certification

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
Test Administrator Qualifications	<p>Test administrators must have the following qualifications in addition to meeting training/recertification requirements:</p> <p>WIDA Screener Online Preference is for licensed EL staff. Licensed teachers/administrators in the school are considered most qualified. The list below is in descending order of preferred qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed teachers or administrators who work in the school. • Licensed teachers or administrators who work in the district. • Paraprofessionals who work in the school. • School district personnel employed by the school district. • Licensed substitute teachers who are employed by the district for the purpose of administering the test. <p>WIDA Screener Paper and WIDA Screener for Kindergarten</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading, Writing, Listening— same hierarchy as above. • Speaking—licensed teacher with training in Second Language Acquisition.
Test Administrator Training Requirements	<p>WIDA Screener: Test administrators (TAs) must complete WIDA certification for the grade levels they will administer. To be certified to administer WIDA Screener, test administrators must complete the following courses 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 • 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>New for 2024-25: WIDA Screener training courses will be available on the WIDA Secure Portal July 1, 2024.</p>

Test Administrator Training and Certification

	<p>It is strongly recommended that raters of the Speaking test have a second language acquisition background (licensed EL teachers).</p> <p>Districts will decide if other staff, DACs and SACs, should view annually.</p> <p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: WIDA certified test administrators may administer the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten.</p> <p>Test administrators must complete WIDA certification by completing the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Administration and Scoring training course and passing both certification quizzes.</p> <p>Districts will decide if other staff, DACs and SACs, should view annually.</p>
Website Permissions	<p>WIDA Secure Portal (portal.wida.us) Test administrators should contact their District Assessment Coordinator for access to training materials.</p> <p>WIDA AMS (DRC) (wida-ams.us) Test administrators should contact their District Assessment Coordinator for Educator Scoring permissions for WIDA Screener.</p>

ELL Program Requirements – Services & Support

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
<p>ELL Services or Program Requirements</p>	<p>K-12 schools and districts have an obligation to provide a language instruction educational program to all students qualifying for English learner status. This must include (1) regular English language development instruction provided by a licensed ESL teacher and (2) timely access to grade-level content. Instruction must address Minnesota’s English language development standards and academic content standards. MDE partners with WIDA to offer free, on-demand Self-Paced Workshops designed to develop the capacity of educators and education leaders to build on the strengths and address the needs of multilingual learners.</p> <p>The LEAPS Act emphasizes bilingualism and multilingualism as assets, requires educators to be skilled in developing the English language proficiency of their English learners, and adds a provision for districts to institute bilingual and multilingual seals on high school diplomas for students who demonstrate language proficiency in languages other than English.</p> <p>Visit the MDE EL Education page for additional information and resources.</p> <p>Once a child has been identified for English learner status, the student will receive regular instruction from a teacher who has earned the K-12 ESL License. Parent and/or guardian’s permission is not needed for placement, though parents do have the right to opt out of ELD programming for a given school year. This written refusal must be collected annually. Opting out of ELD programming does not change the child’s EL status.</p> <p>The WIDA MODEL, teacher professional judgement, and local language development assessments can be used to reevaluate ongoing placement/ELP leveling as needed.</p>
<p>Declining Services</p>	<p>Parent/guardians may decline to complete the Minnesota Language Survey. They can also decline to have their student screened for English proficiency. These refusals should be documented by the district and placed into the student’s cumulative folder.</p> <p>Parent/guardians may decline to have their student enroll in a language instruction educational program. This written refusal must be collected annually and placed into the student’s cumulative folder. Students whose parents decline EL enrollment will still be reported as EL = Yes, and should still take the annual ACCESS test. Content teachers should make content understandable for English learners (whether or not parents opt out of EL programming). Districts need to ensure that students have access to the grade-level curriculum.</p>