

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:

For general EL policy questions, contact:

Stephanie Vogel
Title III and EL Programs Director
Stephanie.Vogel@vermont.gov

For assessment related questions, contact:

Heidi Jo Bartlett
Assessment Coordinator for English Learners
HeidiJo.Bartlett@vermont.gov
802-828-1080

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>Parents/Guardians complete the Home Language Survey which is administered as part of enrollment and registration in a school district.</p> <p>Appointed administrator refers students with languages other than English in the home to EL Specialists for further screening.</p> <p>The EL Specialist conducts a parent/guardian interview to gather more information where necessary.</p> <p>EL Specialist reviews relevant transcripts and former WIDA Screener or ACCESS for ELLs scores.</p> <p>When deemed appropriate, EL Specialist administers WIDA Screener to identify EL status if no prior data is available or if a WIDA report is not available.</p> <p>LEA notifies parent/guardian of EL identification and placement decisions within 30 days of enrollment or within two weeks of arriving in the district if the student's arrival occurs after the start of the year.</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

	<p>Appointed and trained staff member uploads HLS information into the Home Language Survey Collection Site if the student is determined to be an EL and/or if <i>they meet requirements for identification as an immigrant.*</i></p> <p>Note: It is possible that immigrant students might not have a language other than English reported. Immigrant status is determined if the student is born outside of the US or Puerto Rico.</p>
Timelines	<p>ELs must be identified, and their parents notified of support services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the student enrolls at the beginning of the school year, parent notification is within 30 calendar days. • After the beginning of the school year, parent notification is within two weeks of placement. <p>For sample translated notification letters, see the TransAct Parent Notices Platform. If you need a log in, go to the ParentNotices Self-Onboarding link.</p> <p>Parents/guardians must be given the opportunity to decline services.</p> <p>Note: All notifications must also be given to the parents/guardians in an accessible format including being in the language they prefer and in a mode they can access – i.e. translated or interpreted, where necessary.</p>
Home Language Survey	<p>Information regarding Vermont’s Home Language Survey including a training video can be found here. All students should be given a Home Language Survey upon enrollment for the first time in a district.</p> <p>Note: As of 2023, the home language surveys of all identified PreK students must also be included in the home language survey collection site. If the student’s PreK school is not listed, use the school they will attend as a Kindergarten student.</p> <p>If a PreK student is identified as an English Learner, they must be rescreened upon starting kindergarten following the guidelines below and the timelines above.</p> <p>New for 2025-2026: Vermont will not be mandating the use of the Alternate Screener as we work to inform the field, collect feedback, and provide guidance around this topic. The Alternate Screener training course and resources are available for educators to view within the Secure Portal.</p> <p>Note: This does not absolve the field from screening students with significant cognitive disabilities whose Home Language Surveys, past educational records, and/or family interviews indicate a potential English Learner. Please reach out to Heidi Jo with any questions.</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

State Approved Assessments

The following WIDA Screening tools are approved for initial identification and placement.

Pre-K: WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (only speaking and listening domains) or any other locally developed assessment tools and protocols. Note that the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is not necessarily developmentally appropriate. For examples of other PreK screeners, please refer to the [Multilingual English Learners in Vermont](#) website.

Kindergarten:

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

- In the first semester, speaking and listening only
- In the second semester, all domains

Grades 1-12:

WIDA Screener Online

WIDA Screener Paper

- **1st Grade:** WIDA Screener for Kindergarten may be used for 1st graders who initially enroll in the first semester
- **2nd Grade:** WIDA Screener for 1st grade may be used for 2nd graders who initially enroll in the first semester
- **4th Grade:** WIDA Screener for 2-3 grade band may be used for 4th graders who initially enroll in the first semester
- **6th Grade:** WIDA Screener for 4-5 grade band may be used for 6th graders who initially enroll in the first semester
- **9th Grade:** WIDA Screener for 6-8 grade may be used for 9th graders who initially enroll in the first semester

WIDA Alternate Screener; grades K-12

The WIDA Alternate Screener is not mandated for Vermont in the 2025-2026 school year. Educators may choose to administer this screener with students who have identified significant cognitive disabilities. If administered, the grade band recommendations should be followed:

- Kindergarten: In the first semester, speaking and listening only are tested. In the second semester, all domains are tested.
- 3rd grade: WIDA Alternate Screener for K-2 may be used for 3rd graders who initially enroll in the first semester.
- 6th grade: WIDA Alternate Screener for 3-5 may be used for 6th graders who initially enroll in the first semester.
- 9th grade: WIDA Alternate Screener for 6-8 may be used for 9th graders who initially enroll in the first semester.

Initial Assessment and Identification

Paper Based Screener Costs	<p>Districts are responsible for purchasing and paying for WIDA Screener Paper or professionally printed WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and/or Alternate Screener kits. WIDA Screener for Kindergarten test materials and the Alternate Screener test materials may be downloaded at no cost in the WIDA Secure Portal.</p> <p>For more information, go to the WIDA Store.</p>
Identification/Placement Criteria	<p>Exit Criteria:</p> <p>To be eligible for automatic exit, the current criterion is a 5.0 overall proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs in grades 1-12. For Kindergarten students, students must have a proficiency level of at least 5 in all domains to be considered for automatic exit. As a reminder, districts must monitor students for a minimum of two years after exit. The state is required to report accountability data for 4 years.</p> <p>Students who score between 4.3-4.9 are eligible for exit via an alternate exit scheme. Details on this process can be found here. NOTE: Look for an updated exit criteria document on the Vermont AOE website once approval is finalized.</p> <p>To be eligible for automatic exit for students who take the Alternate ACCESS assessment, students must achieve an Overall proficiency level of at least 4.</p> <p>Additional information can be found at the Vermont Exit Procedures link above.</p> <p>Identification Criteria:</p> <p>Learners who score less than 5.0 overall proficiency level on the ACCESS screener are identified as ELs. If the Alternate ACCESS screener is used, students with a score of less than 4 overall proficiency level are identified as ELs.</p> <p>Please see this guidance document for a resource: Multilingual Learners and Dual Identification Agency of Education (vermont.gov)</p>

Initial Assessment and Identification

Other Useful Resources or Information

For further information or assistance with placement questions, please reach out to either Stephanie or Heidi Jo.

Some additional resources:

- [Multilingual English Learners in Vermont](#)
- Vermont's [Home Language Survey](#) online portal
- [U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights](#)
- [English Learner Toolkit](#)

Test Administrator Training and Certification

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance
Test Administrator Qualifications	<p>A licensed or provisionally-licensed ML specialist who has successfully completed the required training may administer the assessment. Certification or recertification is required each school year between July 1st and January, before the ACCESS testing window opens. As a reminder, some trainings are revised over the summer so training should be completed after the revised training courses have been made available (July 1st or later).</p> <p>As a reminder, there are changes this year to the Kindergarten ACCESS, so those training modules will open on September 29, 2025 in preparation of the winter ACCESS testing.</p> <p>Anyone administering either the ACCESS Screener or the Alternate ACCESS screener needs to be recertified annually before any identifications are made. The trainings are updated by WIDA annually in July, and the recertification needs to be completed between July 1st and the date the screener is administered.</p> <p>It is possible to request a waiver for the requirement that the administrator to be a licensed ML specialist. For example, it is common to have the Alternate ACCESS administered by a school employee with whom the student is familiar. Requests for waivers should be made to Heidi Jo Bartlett.</p>
Test Administrator Training Requirements	<p>Note: All test administrator trainings must be completed, including passing all certifications quizzes, in the school year of administration, between July 1st and the date of administration with students. This includes TA trainings for the ACCESS and the Screeners assessments.</p> <p>Screeners Test Administration Training Requirements</p> <p>WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Test administrators must complete the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Administration and Scoring training course.</p> <p>WIDA Alternate Screener: Test administrators must complete the WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring training course. New for 2025-2026: The WIDA Alternate Screener training course will be available July 1.</p> <p>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

Test Administrator Training and Certification

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:

- Speaking for Grades 1-5: WIDA Screener
- Speaking for Grades 6-12: WIDA Screener
- Writing for Grades 1-5: Scoring WIDA Screener
- Writing for Grades 6-12: Scoring WIDA Screener

Recertification policy: Vermont *requires* annual recertification for WIDA Screener Speaking and Writing.

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.

Annual English Language Proficiency Assessment Test Administration Training Requirements**Kindergarten:**

- Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs: Administration and Scoring (completed after September 29, 2025)

Grades 1-12:

- Online ACCESS for ELLs: Administration
- Paper ACCESS for ELLs: Administration
 - Speaking: Scoring ACCESS Paper (as determined by grade)
 - Writing: Scoring ACCESS Paper (as determined by grade)

Alternate ACCESS:

- Alternate Access: Administration and Scoring

Test administrators need only complete trainings for the tests they are administering. Test certifications must be reported annually to Heidi Jo by the DTC before testing begins. Look for emails closer to testing for the test certification form.

Test Administrator Training and Certification

Website Permissions	<p>WIDA Secure Portal (portal.wida.us) WIDA Client Services may create accounts for professional learning and assessment training.</p> <p>WIDA AMS (DRC) (wida-ams.us) District Test Coordinators can provide permissions in WIDA AMS.</p>
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EL Program Requirements – Services & Support

Question/Topic	State-specific Guidance										
EL Services or Program Requirements	<p>The AOE does not prescribe the specific nature of the EL services that should be provided; however, parents who are concerned about the quality or content of the services their students are receiving have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.</p> <p>Parents must be notified of the student’s annual ACCESS Scores in a language and mode they understand.</p> <p>We report federally through EDFacts designating what services are being provided to individual learners according to the following LIEP (Language Instruction Educational Program) codes. These are reported in the state-defined optional field in the initial student uploads in DRC.</p> <table> <tr> <th>Vermont Code</th><th>EDFACTS CODE SET</th></tr> <tr> <td>0001</td><td>Transitional Bilingual Education or Early-Exit Bilingual Education</td></tr> <tr> <td>0002</td><td>Dual Language or Two-way Immersion</td></tr> <tr> <td>0003</td><td>ESL or ELD</td></tr> <tr> <td>0004</td><td>Content Classes with integrated ESL support</td></tr> </table>	Vermont Code	EDFACTS CODE SET	0001	Transitional Bilingual Education or Early-Exit Bilingual Education	0002	Dual Language or Two-way Immersion	0003	ESL or ELD	0004	Content Classes with integrated ESL support
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EL Program Requirements – Services & Support

	0005	Newcomer programs
	0006	Other
	DEC	Parent Declined Services
	<p>We leave it to the districts to appropriately crosswalk their services with these coding designations for reporting purposes. There is additional information in the Vermont Materials Management documents found in Vermont's WIDA state profile page under Supplemental Documents.</p>	
Declining Services	<p>When parents/guardians are notified of their student's designation, they have the right to opt-out of services. Refusal of services needs to be documented and signed, and the document needs to be stored in the student's cumulative file at their district. Despite declining services, identified learners retain their EL status and must still be assessed annually with the WIDA ACCESS assessment until they meet the State's current exit criteria. The student must still be provided with meaningful access to grade-level education programs. Parents have the right to opt-in again at any point.</p> <p>Review the EL Tool Kit for information on serving students who have been opted out of EL services.</p>	