

WIDATM

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
Interpretive Guide
for Score Reports
Grades 1-12
SPRING 2020

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT SCORES

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This document helps educators understand what students' Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores mean and what to do with that information. It also introduces some of the tools available to program coordinators and district administrators interested in reviewing and taking action on group performance on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

This document presents recommendations from WIDA for interpreting and using Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores. Keep in mind that state and district policies on test score use differ from each other and may vary from the recommendations presented in this document.

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 requires that all students identified as ELLs, including those who receive special education services, be assessed annually for English language proficiency. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 also mandates that students with disabilities participate in state and district assessment programs, including alternate assessments, with the accommodations documented in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Alternate ACCESS for ELLs meets federal accountability requirements and provides educators with a measure of the English language proficiency growth of ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Understanding Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Scores

Before diving into your students' score reports, take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources on [the Alternate ACCESS Scores and Reports page of the WIDA website](#) that help you understand what test scores mean in practical terms. As you examine and discuss the English language proficiency profile that each Individual Student Report shows, use WIDA resources to help you move from scores to practical recommendations for the services, instructional support, and future assessment needs of each student.

Consider holding an in-service session for your school or district ELL teachers and Individualized Education Programs (IEP) teams to talk through [the WIDA English Language Development Standards](#), review [sample score reports](#), and discuss how students' scores might inform plans for classroom instruction and support.

WIDA also offers a variety of professional development sessions, both in-person and online, that can help educators and administrators better understand and make the best use of WIDA assessment scores, standards, and other resources. Check out the [current professional learning offerings](#), and don't miss the annual offerings of a variety of ACCESS for ELLs webinars. Find this year's schedule and recorded webinars in the Download Library in the [Secure Portal](#).

Don't keep Alternate ACCESS for ELLs information to yourself! Your students' scores can be useful in helping parents or guardians, IEP teams, and other educators better understand a student's abilities. Find resources for sharing Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores with parents on the [Family Engagement page](#) of the WIDA website.

Use the WIDA resources above to identify and describe the language abilities a student already has, the skills a student can work on, and the instructional supports that might be effective as a student develops new language abilities. Share the profile and plans you develop with your students' IEP teams and content teachers. Translate your plans into the student's home language and share them with the student's family during conferences, family nights, or home visits so that home can be a place of active language learning.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a suite of large-scale English language proficiency tests for Grade 1–12 students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is one component of a comprehensive, standards-driven system that supports the teaching and learning of English language learners (ELLs). The purpose of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is to monitor student progress in English language proficiency on a yearly basis and to serve as just one of the many criteria that educators consider to determine when English learners have attained an English language proficiency level comparable to that of their English-proficient peers.

For more information about Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, visit wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access.

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Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a standards referenced test, meaning that any student can achieve any score. Students are not ranked against each other in terms of performance. Instead, student performance is compared to the English language development standards WIDA has defined.

Visit wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards for more information on using WIDA standards.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Score Reports

Individual Student

Detailed report of a single student’s performance, including proficiency level and scale scores for each language domain and four composite areas.

Audience

- Students
- Parents & Guardians
- Teachers
- IEP Teams

Use:

Share with students to set language goals. Share with parents and guardians as part of discussions around student progress and achievement. Share with teachers who work with the student to inform classroom instruction and assessment. Share with IEP teams when determining the student’s abilities and needs.

Student Roster

Overview report on the performances of a group of students, including proficiency level and scale scores for each language domain and composite area by school, grade, student, and grade-level cluster.

Audience

- Teachers
- Program Coordinators & Directors
- Administrators

Use

Share with administrators, teachers, and IEP teams to inform classroom instruction and assessment.

School, District, and State Frequency

High-level reports for a single grade within a school, district, or state on the number and percentage of tested students that achieved each proficiency level for each language domain and composite area.

School Report Audience

- Program Coordinators & Directors
- Administrators

Use

Share with school and district staff to inform school-level programmatic decisions.

District Report Audience

- Program Coordinators & Directors
- Administrators
- Boards of Education

Use

Share with district staff to inform district-level programmatic decisions.

State Report Audience

- Boards of Education
- State Assessment and Title III Personnel

Use

Share with state staff to inform state- and district-level programmatic decisions.

Translated versions of the Individual Student Report are available in [WIDA AMS](#).

Available languages include: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic (MSA), Bengali, Bosnian, Burmese, Chamorro, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Chuukese, French (European), German, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hawaiian, Hindi, Hmong, Ilokano, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Lao, Malayalam, Mandingo, Marshallese, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Somali, Spanish (International), Swahili, Tagalog, Telugu, Tongan, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Wolof.


Translated reports provided to students’ families should accompany—not replace!—official reports in English.





View sample reports at wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access/scores-reports.

Individual Student Scores

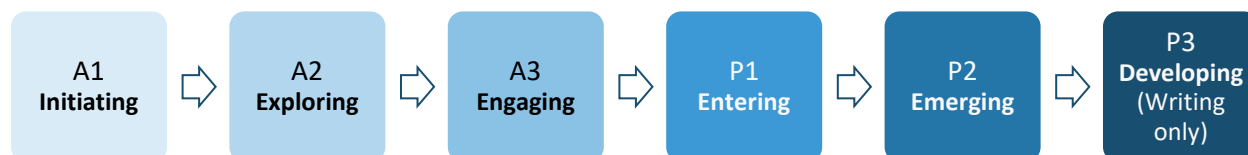
Domain Scores

The Individual Student Report contains detailed information about a student’s performance on each section of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. It is primarily for students, parents or guardians, teachers, and IEP teams. It provides a snapshot of how well the student understands and can produce the language needed to access academic content and succeed in school. The Individual Student Report shows both a proficiency level and a scale score for each of the four domains of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.



Language Domain	Proficiency Level**						Scale Score (Possible 910-960) and Confidence Band See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions					
	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	(P3)	910	920	930	940	950	960
Listening 	A1							920				
Speaking 		A2							925			
Reading 			A3							930		
Writing 				P1							935	

Proficiency levels are interpretive scores. In other words, they are based on (but separate from) the student’s earned test score (see the [Listening and Reading Scores section](#) below for detail). The proficiency level score describes the student’s performance in terms of the six WIDA Alternate English Language Proficiency Levels:



Alternate ACCESS for ELLs proficiency levels are unique. A student who scores a P1 on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is not necessarily performing at the same level as a student who scores at the Entering proficiency level on ACCESS for ELLs Online or ACCESS for ELLs Paper.

At the end of the Individual Student Report, each proficiency level is explained in terms of what the student can do using English. See the [sample report](#) for a complete list of these performance definitions. These descriptions reflect the language acquisition process at each level, including ELL students’ increasing ability to produce and process an increasing variety of language forms and conventions.

Take care when comparing proficiency level scores across grades. A second grader with a P1 in Listening and an A3 in Speaking has more-developed listening skills than speaking skills. However, proficiency levels are relevant to the context of a particular grade level. A second grader with a P1 in Listening and an eighth grader with a P1 in Listening are exposed to very different, grade-level appropriate content as

they test. While their score reports reflect the same proficiency level, the eighth grader is demonstrating more skill by responding to more challenging content.

Use proficiency levels...

- ... to make comparisons across domains.
- ... to develop a student-specific English language skill profile.
- ... as one of multiple criteria to determine a student's eligibility for English language support services.

Scale scores precisely track student growth over time and across grades. Because scale scores take into account differences in item difficulty, they place all students on a single continuum that stretches from Grade 1 through Grade 12.

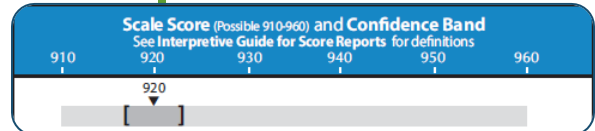
In addition, scale scores allow you to compare student performance across grades, within each domain, with more granularity than you'll see with proficiency levels. For example, using scale scores, you can track how much a student's reading ability increases from sixth to seventh grade or you can compare the writing skills of your school's second graders to that of the fifth graders when evaluating curricula.

Use scale scores...

- ... to monitor student growth over time within a domain, but not across domains. A scale score of 931 in Reading is not the same as a 931 in Speaking!

NA appears on the Individual Student score report when a test booklet or data entered in WIDA AMS indicates that a particular domain test should not be scored. When NA appears for an individual language domain, NA also appears for the composite scores calculated using that domain, including the Overall score. The space on the score report for a domain score is left blank when a test booklet is returned without any evidence that the student engaged with the content of an entire domain test.

A scale score is reported as a single point within a confidence band that shows the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM). In other words, the box beneath the scale score shows the range of scores a student might receive if she took Alternate ACCESS for ELLs over and over again at her current proficiency level.



Confidence bands are a reminder that scales scores represent just one of a range of potential student performance outcomes. Consider, for example, three different test scenarios:

- 1) The student is healthy and well-rested. The test session goes smoothly.
- 2) The student isn't feeling well. The testing session goes smoothly.
- 3) The student is healthy and well-rested. The testing session is repeatedly interrupted by loud noises in the room next door.

Even though the student is the same, has the same proficiency level, and responds to the same test questions in all three scenarios, she is most likely to achieve the highest score in the first scenario. Because Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a statistically reliable assessment, the scores in each scenario would be similar—but probably not exactly the same. The confidence band reflects the expected score variation.

Composite Scores

In addition to proficiency level and scale scores for each domain, students receive a proficiency level score and a scale score for different combinations of the language domains. These composite scores are Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall.

Language Domain	Proficiency Level**						Scale Score (Possible 910-960) and Confidence Band See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions					
	A1	A2	A3	P1	P2	(P3)	910	920	930	940	950	960
Listening	A1						920					
Writing												
Oral Language 50% Listening + 50% Speaking	P2						945					
Literacy 50% Reading + 50% Writing	P3						955					
Comprehension 70% Reading + 30% Listening	A2						940					
Overall* 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking	P1						945					

Composite scores demand careful consideration. An Overall score, for example, can helpfully summarize student performance. However, students with identical Overall scores might have very different profiles in terms of their oral language and literacy development as well as their disabilities. One student might have very strong Listening skills, while another might excel in Speaking. Because a high score in one domain can inflate a composite score, a student's individual performance in each domain is more informative than a single composite score.

Proficiency levels are calculated from scale scores. A Literacy proficiency level is based on the Literacy scale score. The Literacy proficiency level is not an average of the student's proficiency level scores in the individual Reading and Writing domains.

Listening and Reading Scores

At the bottom of the first page of the Individual Student Report, a table shows detail about the number of Listening and Reading items that the student answered correctly. These raw scores are not the same as the scale scores reported above. Scale scores reflect the fact that a student who answers correctly at Cue A demonstrates a higher level of proficiency than a student who answers correctly at Cue C. The raw scores provided for Listening and Reading are a good indicator of how much support the student needed to provide answers, but scale scores show student progress over time and can be used to compare one student's performance to another's.

	# of Correct Responses (out of 9)	Less Support ▶ More Support					
		Cue A		Cue B		Cue C	
		# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses
Listening	5	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%
Reading	3	0		1	33.3%	2	66.6%

The scripted cueing system for the Reading and Listening domain tests provides students up to four opportunities to complete each task successfully. For Cue A, the test administrator delivers the initial prompt and question. If needed, Cue A is repeated. For Cue B, the test administrator delivers a simplified version of the initial prompt. For Cue C, the test administrator delivers a simplified version of the prompt, provides an answer to the question, and asks the question again. This test design offers students supported opportunities to demonstrate their developing English language proficiency without the presentation of overly difficult items.

Understanding Student Growth

Both proficiency levels and scale scores can help you understand student growth year over year. Proficiency levels provide an overview, while scale scores offer more nuance about how much a student's language use and control is changing. As you review Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores and consider student growth, keep the following information in mind:

- A student's foundation in their home or primary language is a good predictor of their English language development. For example, a student with a strong literacy background in a home language is likely to acquire literacy in English at a quicker pace than a student with lower levels of home language literacy.
- The pace of language development is different for each individual. It is common for younger students and those at the beginning proficiency levels to make progress more quickly than older students and those at more advanced proficiency levels.
- Students rarely acquire proficiency across domains at the same pace. Often, oral language skills (listening and speaking) develop faster than literacy skills (reading and writing). At the same time, receptive language skills (listening and reading) often develop faster than productive language skills (speaking and writing). Every student's growth is different, but it's not unusual that students need longer to develop skills in Writing than in any other domain.
- Multiple consecutive years of data are necessary to analyze student growth. Consider the first year a student takes Alternate ACCESS for ELLs as an opportunity to establish a baseline of test performance. Results from the second year can show growth, and only with three years or more of test results can you see trends in the student's language development.

Interpreting Student Scores

- Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores provide information on students' English proficiency. They do not measure students' academic achievement or content knowledge, and they do not provide information about a student's disability.
- Both proficiency level scores and scale scores show growth. However, scale scores are more nuanced and provide a more sensitive measure of language development.
- The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment and score reports are not designed or intended to provide any meaningful information about an individual educator's skills or performance. School- and district-wide trends are more meaningful as a means to evaluate long-term program impacts than as a method to evaluate any one individual or draw conclusions about any particular small group of students.

- To use scores for instructional planning, consult the [Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Speaking and Writing Rubrics](#), which detail the types of spoken and written language expected of students at each proficiency level. For example, you can use these rubrics to see that one characteristic of students at Speaking A2—Exploring is “single words or syllables of single words.” Students at this proficiency level might benefit from classroom activities which focus on combining words to increase meaning, such as moving from “go” to “I go” or “you go.”
- WIDA recommends using Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores as one of multiple pieces of information that inform high-stakes reclassification or exit decisions. Schoolwork, in-class assessments, and IEP team input are all valuable evidence that can help you understand a student’s English language proficiency and development.

State education agencies set reclassification policies, which include determining exit criteria and establishing guidelines for the use of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores.

Group Scores

Student Roster Report

The Student Roster Report contains information on a group of students within a single school and grade. Like the Individual Student Report, the Student Roster Report provides scale scores and proficiency levels for individual language domains and composite areas for each student, giving teachers, administrators, and program coordinators and directors an overview of their students’ English language skills and a place to look for patterns in student performance.

Individual Student Report		Student Roster Report
Confidence bands Proficiency level descriptors	Proficiency levels Scale scores	Multiple students' results

Use the Student Roster Report...

- ... to identify patterns in student performance. Consult with colleagues about factors that might explain similarities and differences in how various groups of students perform.
- ... to verify that student scores reflect reasonable expectations. For example, you can expect that students new to an English language school context or who have had limited or interrupted formal schooling will be at the lower end of the scale. For students with particularly high scores, consider whether their classroom engagement and schoolwork support this indicator that they might be ready to exit language support programs.
- ... to group students for instructional planning or classroom support purposes.
- ... to develop school and district improvement plans or educator professional development opportunities that target the areas in which students are struggling.

Frequency Reports

Frequency reports provide a snapshot of a particular student population. Available for individual schools, districts, and states, these reports show the number and percentage of students in each grade to attain each proficiency level. In addition, the reports provide the highest and lowest scale scores attained in each of the four language domains. (The individual students who earned these high and low scores are not identified.)

Administrators, program coordinators and directors, and boards of education can review frequency reports as they plan the type and amount of English language support services their schools, districts, or states will offer. In combination with educator input and the results of content assessments, frequency reports can help high-level decision and policy makers compare the progress and success of ELL students to that of former ELLs and their English-proficient peers.

Frequency reports do not show the performance of individual students. Instead, they show the performance of a group of students using both real numbers of test-takers and percentages of the total test-taker population. Be sure to use both of these numbers as you consider student performance. Percentages are a useful way to compare populations of different sizes. However, a small population size can distort percentage results—knowing that 100% of students achieved a particular proficiency level isn't all that meaningful if the population size is 1.

Skills at proficiency level P3-Developing are measured only in the Writing domain on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, so no information appears in the P3 cells of the Listening, Speaking, and Reading columns.

As with all student achievement reports, keep in mind that context is crucial. When you share frequency reports with decision makers, also provide information about your students' disabilities as well as their backgrounds in terms of the languages, cultures, and experiences that they bring to your school, district, or state. The frequency report itself cannot explain why students are distributed as they are among the proficiency levels. A school with more new students or a particularly mobile or linguistically diverse population is likely to have more students in the lower proficiency levels than another school with an equally strong English language support program but a more stable and homogeneous student population.

Proficiency Level	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing		# of Students at Level
	# of Students at Level	% of Total Tested	# of Students at Level	% of Total Tested	# of Students at Level	% of Total Tested	# of Students at Level	% of Total Tested	
A1 – Initiating	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
A2 – Exploring	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	50%	2
A3 – Engaging	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
P1 – Entering	0	0%	2	50%	1	25%	0	0%	3
P2 – Emerging	4	100%	2	50%	3	75%	1	25%	7
P3 – Developing*							1	25%	1
Highest Score	947		945		948		953		

What next? Now that you're an expert in student score reports, revisit the [Understanding Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Scores](#) section of this document for resources that can help you connect test scores to classroom practices!