

Utah English Learner (EL) Assessment Guidance

Identification and Entrance Procedures

Students who are new to Utah or returning to Utah after leaving, must be identified, and screened for services within 30 days of the first day of school. Students returning to a Utah school, within the same school year, do not need to be screened if they have a Utah-administrated WIDA Screener or WIDA ACCESS score from the same school year. Students who enroll after the first month at the beginning of the school year must be assessed during the first 10 school days of enrollment.

Entrance Criteria

The English Language Proficiency (ELP) screener determines the need for English language services. The English Language Proficiency (ELP) screener (WIDA Screener) must be given to confirm EL Status (students who score a composite of ELP level 1–4.9). Those who receive a composite score between 5.0 and 6.0 on the WIDA Screener do not qualify for English language services. [Utah English Learner Identification and Placement Guidance Document](#)

New Students to Utah - Process

1. At registration, give [Home Language Survey](#) (HLS, go to Forms) in preferred language for parents/guardians to complete. The HLS can be electronic or paper.
 - The LEA is responsible for providing the preferred language translation
2. The LEA and/or School Language Team reviews the three HLS language questions. If any of the three following questions are answered with any language other than English, then the student must be screened. Students cannot be referred to be screened; screening can only be based on the HLS. The HLS is parental/guardian consent to screen.
 - What is the primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student?
 - What is the language most often spoken by the student?
 - What is the language that the student first acquired?
3. Assess the student using the WIDA Screener (K-12) any of the first three HLS questions were answered with anything other than English.
4. If the student qualifies as EL and for language services, the Student Information System (SIS) needs to be updated to show EL status.
5. For students that qualify as EL and for language services, the [Annual Notification Letter](#) (go to Forms) must be sent to parents/guardians in the preferred language.
 - The LEA is responsible for providing the preferred language translation.

Current Utah Students - Process

1. At registration, give [Home Language Survey](#) (HLS) in preferred language for parents/guardians to complete.
 - The LEA is responsible for providing the preferred language translation
2. The Language Team reviews the three HLS language questions.
3. Check [The Data Gateway](#).

- If the student has WIDA ACCESS assessment scores and still qualifies as EL and for language services per the Exit Criteria, then update the SIS to show current EL status.
 - If the student has WIDA ACCESS assessment scores and has exited EL status, then update the SIS to show the student is proficient and in monitoring or has completed the four years of monitoring.
 - If the student does not have WIDA ACCESS assessment scores, proceed with administering the WIDA Screener (K-12).
4. For students that qualify as EL and for language services, the [Annual Notification Letter](#) must be sent to parents/guardians in the preferred language.
- The LEA is responsible for providing the preferred language translation.

Unique EL Identification Situations

- Conflicting Student EL Information - If the student's cumulative file and Data Gateway records show conflicting EL status information, please contact [USBE WIDA Assessment Specialists](#) for technical assistance and verify the student's information with the parents/guardians.
- Potentially Inaccurate HLS - Different languages listed from school to school and different languages listed for siblings.
 - LEAs need to honor what the parents/guardians put on the HLS. LEAs can pursue a safe and open conversation with the parents/guardians to get a better understanding of the student's needs. Home situations can change. Additionally, previous HLS may have been completed erroneously. LEAs cannot request or demand the parents/guardians change their answers. Parents/guardians can update the HLS, if they choose. LEAs cannot make changes to an HLS. All communication must be documented.
- Paper and Alternate Screeners - Recently arrived ELs and/or students with significant disabilities may be administered WIDA Screener Paper with appropriate accommodations. The state does not define alternate identification criteria for students with disabilities, but appropriate accommodations should be provided if the student is known to have a disability. A WIDA Alternate Screener will be available in 2025-2026. Please contact [USBE WIDA Specialists](#) for WIDA Paper Screeners.

EL Language Services ([USBE Title III Website](#))

Annual Notification Letter

For students who qualify as EL and for language services, the [Annual Notification Letter](#) must be sent to parents/guardians in the preferred language. The LEA is responsible for providing the preferred language translation.

Parental Exclusion

Parents/guardians must be notified of their student's eligibility for EL services and their right to decline services in the Annual Notification Letter. Parents/guardians may elect to exclude their student out of services by indicating this choice on the Annual Notification Letter,

which is kept with the student's cumulative record. **Parental/guardian exclusion of EL services does not opt students out of annual WIDA ACCESS assessment.** The LEA must administer WIDA ACCESS annually.

Annual ELP Assessment (WIDA ACCESS)

All EL students must be tested annually using the ACCESS assessment by annually trained test administrators. When students earn an Overall Proficiency Level of 4.2 or higher and a Speaking score of 3.5 or higher, they are considered fluent in English. Students are then re-designated to monitoring status for four years. Students are not required to take the ACCESS assessment during these four years of monitoring.

Parental Exclusion

Parents/guardians can elect to exclude students out of language services, but they cannot exclude students from WIDA ACCESS. LEAs must provide the student with the opportunity to test. LEAs should document everything if parents/guardians refuse to allow their student to test. Parents/guardians always have the ultimate right, but LEAs cannot provide parents/guardians a testing exclusion form to sign in order to opt the student out of testing. The only way a student can be deemed proficient and be reclassified as a former EL is by taking ACCESS.

Scores

LEAs must ensure that the test results are provided to students and parents/guardians, along with information on how to appropriately interpret scores and reports, within three weeks of receipt of test scores by the LEA.

- **Update SIS** - The SIS needs to be updated by the LEA to show the student's EL status and score.

Exiting and Monitoring ELs

Criteria

In Utah, reclassification, or exit criteria, is based on the following two criteria: 1) ELs receive a minimum overall composite score of 4.2, and 2) a minimum score of 3.5 in the speaking domain on the annual WIDA ACCESS for ELs assessment.

Exit Letter and Conference

The LEA must notify parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of student scores within three weeks of receiving WIDA ACCESS results, in accordance with the [Standard Test Administration & Testing Ethics Policy](#). LEAs shall notify the parents/guardians through the [standard parent exit notification letter](#) (go to Forms) that the individual student has been exited from EL status and active language instruction services and will be monitored for a period of four years. The LEA shall initiate a teacher-student-parents/guardians conference, within 30 days of the LEA receiving the WIDA ACCESS for ELs scores, to discuss the necessary support for the student's ability to make continuous progress.

Monitoring

After the annual WIDA ACCESS for ELs assessment, students who meet the exit criteria enter a four year period of monitoring. Monitoring ensures that former EL students are making appropriate progress with respect to content knowledge while in the regular educational setting. LEAs that serve EL students are required to establish policies and procedures to ensure that former ELs in monitoring status are provided access to equal educational opportunities offered to peers and have access to grade-level content.

Requalification

When an LEA's monitoring of an exited EL student indicates that a persistent language barrier may be the cause of academic difficulty because general education and remediation services have proven inadequate, LEAs may re-test the student using WIDA Screener to see if the student must be offered additional language assistance services. In no case should re-testing of an exited, former EL student be prohibited. If the student is reentered into EL services, however, the LEA should document the reasons why and the parents'/guardians' consent to active EL language services.

Accommodations

Accommodations for WIDA ACCESS assessments are intended for ELs with disabilities but in rare cases could be assigned for students who do not have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans after contact with USBE. It is important to understand that English language services and special education services are based on two different entitlement programs, and one service does not trump the other service. Students may require both services based on their individual needs.

The determination of accommodations for WIDA, should be based on the individual student needs to access each subtest in accordance with the accommodations the student is using to support instructional needs.

[WIDA's Accessibility & Accommodations Manual](#) is provided to guide teams through the selection and provision of accessibility supports and accommodations for ACCESS for ELs and WIDA Screener testing. District and school administrative staff, educators, EL specialists, support staff, and members of decision-making teams, including those responsible for IEPs, 504 Plans, and support for students covered under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), should be familiar with this guidance and reference it as they prepare for testing.

Specific Accommodation Considerations

- **When to use the paper screener** - Recommended for recently arrived ELs, students with no technology experience, students with visual impairments, students needing intensive behavior supports, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and students with significant cognitive disabilities. WIDA Screener Paper costs will be covered by USBE. LEAs need to contact USBE for WIDA Screener Paper test kits.

- **Alternate assessment screener** - An Alternate Screener will be available starting the 2025-2026 school year for students identified with a significant cognitive disability. Until the Alternate Screener is available, students must attempt the WIDA Paper Screener with necessary allowable accommodations and LEAs must document where the student is not able to access domains of the screener. Information gained from the screener along with information from other classroom data, observations, anecdotal data, and additional documentation the school has gathered to help the EL and IEP team determine the necessary services for the student. These additional resources from WIDA can help to give the team additional insight into the student's needs for services:
 - [ALTELLA Individual Characteristics Questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Classroom Observation Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Teacher Interview Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
- **Braille:**
 - Braille Screener - Currently under development. Until the Braille Screener is available, students must attempt the WIDA Paper Screener with necessary allowable accommodations and LEAs must document where the student is not able to access domains of the screener. Information gained from the screener along with information from other classroom data, observations, anecdotal data, and additional documentation the school has gathered to help the EL and IEP team determine the necessary services for the student. These additional resources from WIDA can help to give the team additional insight into the student's needs for services.
 - [ALTELLA Individual Characteristics Questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Classroom Observation Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Teacher Interview Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
 - Ordering Braille ACCESS - LEAs are responsible for ordering Braille ACCESS. These orders can be placed in the initial test materials ordering window. Braille is available for the listening, reading and writing domains.

Alternate ACCESS - LEAs are responsible for ordering Alternate ACCESS. These orders can be placed during the initial test materials ordering window. Students must be identified as having a significant cognitive disability and meet the other Utah alternate assessment participation criteria (found in [Utah's Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#) in Accommodations tab) to participate in the Alternate ACCESS. IEP teams need to determine if the Alternate ACCESS is appropriate for individual students.

Paper ACCESS - Recommended for recently arrived ELs, students with no technology experience, students with visual impairments, students needing intensive behavior supports, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and students with significant cognitive disabilities that do not qualify for the Alternate ACCESS. WIDA Paper ACCESS costs will be

covered by USBE. LEAs need to order Paper ACCESS materials during the annual WIDA ACCESS Additional Materials Ordering Window.

Domain Exemptions - No disability exempts a student from assessing all domains. However, when all appropriate accommodations have been offered and the student's disability remains a barrier to assessing a particular language domain, the student may be exempted from that individual domain test. The LEA must submit a [USBE Exceptional Accommodation Request Form](#) and receive approval from USBE in order to exempt a student from a domain(s) of the WIDA ACCESS assessment. Students must be assessed in all other domains the student is able to access.