



Utah State
Board of
Education

Assessment
and
Accountability

UTAH ENGLISH LEARNER ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

July 2026

IDENTIFICATION AND ENTRANCE PROCEDURES

Students who are new to Utah, or who return to Utah after leaving, must be screened within 30 days of the first day of school to determine whether they are English Learners (ELs) and require services. Students returning to a Utah school, within the same school year, do not need to be screened if they have any 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. Any WIDA Screener must be administered by an annually trained test administrator.

WIDA Screener includes: WIDA Screener Online Grades 1-12, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Paper Screener Grades 1-12, or WIDA Alternate Screener Grades K-12. Utah students will utilize the WIDA Screener Online unless a unique situation warrants another WIDA Screener format; more information is below.

WIDA ACCESS includes: WIDA ACCESS Online Grades 1-12, WIDA Kindergarten ACCESS, WIDA ACCESS Paper Grades 1-12, or WIDA Alternate ACCESS Grades K-12. Utah students will utilize the WIDA Online ACCESS unless a unique situation warrants another WIDA ACCESS format; more information is below.

ENTRANCE CRITERIA

The English Language Proficiency (ELP) screener determines the need for English language services. The ELP screener (any WIDA Screener) must be given to confirm EL Status (students who score a composite score between 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), [under the Forms tab](#), 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 will review 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 a WIDA Screener (K-12) if 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 (under the forms tab) 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
 - The Language Team reviews the three HLS language questions.
- 2) Check [The Data Gateway](#).
 - If the student has a WIDA Screener and/or ACCESS assessment score 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 a WIDA Screener and/or ACCESS assessment score 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 a WIDA Screener and/or ACCESS assessment score, proceed with administering a WIDA Screener (K-12).
- 3) 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 Screener - Potential ELs with little to no technology experience or students whose disability may impact their access to the online screener may be administered WIDA Paper Screener. Contact USBE's WIDA Assessment Specialists if you need a WIDA Paper Screener.
- WIDA Alternate Screener – Potential EL students with the most significant disability, that meet [Utah's Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria](#), may be administered the WIDA Alternate Screener.

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 from language 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 a WIDA 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.

WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS

The WIDA Alternate Access is for students whose IEP team has identified the student as having the most significant cognitive disability. EL students must meet the criteria outlined in the [USBE Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#). IEP teams need to determine if the Alternate ACCESS is appropriate for individual students.

EL students with the most significant cognitive disability must be tested annually using the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment by annually trained test administrators. When students earn an:

- Overall Composite Score of 5 (Automatic Exit),
OR
- As determined by the school IEP and EL specialist team, Alternate ACCESS Overall Composite Score of 4 and a DLM English Language Arts Score of 4 (At the discretion of the LEA, and the team has determined the student has proficient academic English to access content learning),

they are considered fluent in English. Students are then re-designated to monitoring status for four years. Students are not required to take the Alternate 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 Student Information System (SIS) after the school year roll-over - The SIS needs to be updated by the LEA to show the student's EL status and score. LEAs need to update the SIS after

the July 1st school year roll-over to ensure Title III counts for the previous year are accurate per Title III funding.

EXITING AND MONITORING ELS

EXIT CRITERIA FOR GENERAL WIDA ACCESS

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. This exit criteria applies to students taking one of the following: ACCESS Online (1-12), Paper ACCESS (1-12), Kindergarten ACCESS, or Braille ACCESS (K-12).

Note: This exit criteria was established in 2022-2023. Prior to 2022-2023, the exit criteria was an overall composite score of 5.0. Students that reached this former exit criteria should remain exited and monitored accordingly. Only the newly established 2022-2023 exit criteria can be applied as of August 2023; no combination of the old and new exit criteria can be considered.

EXIT CRITERIA FOR WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS

For Utah students K-12 taking Alternate ACCESS, reclassification, or exit criteria, has two pathways:

- Overall Composite Score of 5 (Automatic Exit)
OR
- As determined by the school IEP and EL specialist team, Alternate ACCESS Overall Composite Score of 4 and a DLM English Language Arts Score of 4 (At the discretion of the LEA, and the team has determined the student has proficient academic English to access content learning)

Note: This alternate exit criteria was established in 2025-2026. Prior to 2025-2026, there was not an approved alternate exit criteria for the state of Utah. Students in grades K-3 can only be exited with an Overall Composite Score of 5 as those grades do not take the DLM 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 monitoring and 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.

RECLASSIFICATION

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 screeners and 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 any WIDA Screener or ACCESS assessment 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 available for WIDA Screeners and WIDA ACCESS assessments. 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 other disabilities where a paper test would yield more accurate results for the student. WIDA Screener Paper costs will be covered by USBE. LEAs need to contact USBE for WIDA Screener Paper test kits.
- Alternate assessment screener – The alternate screener is for students whose IEP team has identified the student as having the most significant cognitive disability and meet the criteria outlined in the [USBE Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#).
- 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.
 - [Individual Characteristics Questionnaire \(ICQ\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Classroom Observation Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
 - [ALTELLA Teacher Interview Protocol \(PDF\)](#)
 - 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. Please review the braille guidance in [WIDA's Accessibility & Accommodations Manual](#).

ALTERNATE ACCESS

The WIDA Alternate Access is for students whose IEP team has identified the student as having the most significant cognitive disability and meet the criteria outlined in the [USBE Alternate Assessment Participation Guidelines](#). IEP teams need to determine if the Alternate ACCESS is appropriate for individual students.

LEAs are responsible for ordering Alternate ACCESS. These orders can be placed during the initial test materials ordering window.

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 other disabilities where a paper test would yield more accurate results for the student. 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.

USBE CONTACT INFORMATION

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