

# Understanding the WIDA Assessments

## Relevant assessments:

- **WIDA™**
  - » WIDA ACCESS for ELLs
  - » WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
  - » WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)
  - » WIDA Screener

- What is WIDA?
- Newly Enrolling Students
- Why Test for English Language Proficiency?
- Basics of WIDA Assessments
- Preparing to Administer WIDA ACCESS for ELLs
- WIDA Assessment Results



# Intro

The **WIDA ACCESS for ELLs** and the **WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs** are required K-12 yearly summative assessments of students' English language abilities in Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking, for students identified as English Learners (ELs). Students are identified as ELs through the use of the **Kindergarten WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)** or the **WIDA Screener** until they reach the level the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has determined as proficient. This chapter will help coordinators understand what the EL proficiency assessments are, how to prepare for them, and the reports available after administration, by answering the following questions:

- ▶ What is WIDA?
- ▶ What do I do with my newly enrolling students?
- ▶ Why are states required to give a summative English language proficiency assessment?
- ▶ What are the basics of the WIDA Assessments?
- ▶ How do I prepare myself and other staff members to administer WIDA assessments?
- ▶ Who else do I need to know and work with in my district?
- ▶ How will results be reported?

## What is WIDA?



WIDA is actually a consortium, managed through the University of Wisconsin. This consortium creates a set of assessments, English language development standards, and professional learning targeted towards helping states meet the federal obligations as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, as well as many civil rights laws for students who are non-native English speakers. Michigan uses four WIDA assessments: Kindergarten WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), WIDA Screener (Grades

1-12), WIDA ACCESS for ELLs [English Language Learners] (Grades K-12), and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs (Grades 1-12). The Kindergarten W-APT and the WIDA Screener are used to identify students who are English learners (ELs). The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are summative assessments that are used to ensure schools are helping their ELs achieve English language proficiency.

## What do I do with my newly enrolling students?



You will want to have a good understanding of your enrollment processes, and have the following things in place for all students at the time of enrollment:

- **Home Language Survey Questions** All students' enrollment forms must have the following state required questions on them:

- » Is your child’s native tongue a language other than English?
- » Is the primary language used in your child’s home or environment a language other than English?
- Refer to the [MDE English Learner Program Entrance and Exit Protocol Document](#). Based on the criteria found in this document, you and possibly the team of educators with whom you work will need to screen the student using the appropriate WIDA screening test and then identify the student as an EL or not based on the Entrance and Exit Protocol.
- Ensure the student is appropriately identified as needing EL services in MSDS:
  - » You will work with those responsible for updating student level information and sending it to the state. Inappropriate identification can lead to loss of funding opportunities as well as other assessment and accountability issues.
  - » Ensure that all students who are identified as needing EL services take the summative WIDA ACCESS for ELLs or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. This includes transfer students who were identified by a different district as EL.

## Why are states required to give a summative English language proficiency assessment?



There is a simple answer to the question of why states give students identified as English learners a test every year to measure their English language proficiency—because it’s required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The longer part of the answer is that this requirement to assess students stems from many cases of non-native English-speaking students being underserved in schools. A landmark Supreme Court case (*Lau v. Nicholls*, 1974) resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that schools must provide a “meaningful” education for these students. This does not mean merely including them in general education courses; it means providing additional English language services so that the students can learn enough English for those

general education classes to be understandable. The English proficiency assessments are tied to this ruling to ensure that schools are following through on the requirement to provide English language support to these students. The assessments help to answer the questions of whether or not students are attaining English proficiency and are making progress in learning English. ELs are still required to take the appropriate grade level content area assessments—such as M-STEP, MI-Access, PSAT, SAT, or ACT—in addition to the WIDA ACCESS assessment. The only exception to this rule is for students who are identified as “recently arrived” students. You can learn more about these qualifications by reviewing the chapter on this topic in the [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#).

## What are the basics of the WIDA Assessments?



The K W-APT is designed to be a one-on-one paper/pencil assessment that can be downloaded when needed from the WIDA Secure Portal. For more information about the basics of this assessment, see the chapter called [WIDA ACCESS Placement Test \(W-APT\) and WIDA Screener Preparation and](#)

[Administration](#) as well as the [WIDA Screener and W-APT Michigan Policy Manual](#). The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are required K-12 yearly summative assessments of the student’s English language abilities in Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking, for students

identified as English learners. ESSA requires each state to administer an assessment that tests students in these areas of language development. Students are identified as ELs until they reach the level MDE has determined as proficient.

The testing window for both of these assessments occurs in the winter of each year, typically during a 7-week window in February and March. For dates and testing activities, refer to the [List of Important Dates](#), located on the [WIDA web page](#).

The difference between the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is that the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a paper/pencil assessment specifically for students who are English learners but are also identified as students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Alternate ACCESS is only available for students in grades 1-12. For information about how to determine which assessment a student should take, educators should review the Michigan [WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Selection Guidance Document](#) found on the [WIDA web page](#).

The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs is an online assessment for students in grades 1-12; the kindergarten form of this test remains a paper/pencil test.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Educators will discontinue the use of the K W-APT at the end of the 2021-22 school year and transition to using the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten. Beginning in April 2022, students enrolling as a part of Kindergarten round-up should

be screened using WIDA Screener for Kindergarten instead of the K W-APT. However, all students enrolling as Kindergartners and receiving services during the 2021-22 school year should be assessed using the K W-APT.

The WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs must be administered individually. Portions of the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs require the test to be administered individually as well, depending on the grade level and mode of testing.

Additionally, depending on the test administered, grade level, and domain (Listening, Speaking, Reading, or Writing), educators may be required to score the assessment themselves. Because of this, educators must pass an online assessment training course to ensure they are appropriately trained to administer and score these assessments. The training course and online quizzes are available through educators' [WIDA Secure Portal](#) accounts. You can get more information about obtaining an account from your district EL Assessment Coordinator or in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) chapter of this training guide.

The length of time to administer these assessments varies between grade level, mode of testing, and even the student's English language proficiency level. For example, a student with very low speaking ability may complete the Speaking test more quickly than more proficient students. More information about the timing of assessments can be found in the appropriate [WIDA Test Administration Manuals](#).

## How do I prepare myself and other staff members to administer WIDA assessments?



Educators overseeing and administering the WIDA tests will need access to a number of different online systems for the following purposes:

- » [WIDA Secure Portal](#) – a secure portal through which training courses and some administration materials can be accessed
- » [OEAA Secure Site](#) – a secure website through which students' scores can be downloaded

- » [WIDA AMS](#) – a secure website through which educators will manage administrative tasks such as assigning students to test sessions, ordering additional materials, and printing test tickets

All educators who will be administering these assessments must complete appropriate assessment training courses to earn a certificate that verifies the skills and knowledge required to administer and

score (where appropriate) these assessments. See the appropriate assessment preparation chapters for training requirements.

The best resources to review in preparation for administering the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are the following (available on the [WIDA web page](#)):

- » [Michigan-Specific Test Administration Manual](#)
- » [WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Checklist](#) (available on the [Michigan page of the WIDA website](#))

## Who else do I need to know and work with in my district?



As you think about creating your internal processes for enrollment and W-APT administration, you will want to know and/or specifically identify who would be responsible for each of the following steps in your process. If no one is currently responsible for these activities, work with your district's leadership to get the role filled.

### ■ Enrollment

- » Who actually enrolls students initially? Who updates the enrollment forms? Do the enrollment forms include the correct Home Language Survey questions?

### ■ Test Administrators

- » Who will be administering the different WIDA assessments in your district? Are the educators who screen students the same as those who administer the summative WIDA assessment?

### ■ MSDS

- » Who is responsible for entering student information into your Student Information System?
- » Who is responsible for making sure that the student information is uploaded correctly to the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS)? Does your MSDS person know when to exit eligible proficient students from EL services so these students do not need to be tested in the following school year?

### ■ EEM

- » Who is responsible for updating the district's personnel list on a regular basis? Are you listed as the District EL Assessment Coordinator yet?

## How will results be reported?



For the WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessments, educators will receive Individual Student Reports, Class Roster, School Frequency, and District Frequency reports, both in hard copy format and electronic format through [WIDA AMS](#). For the WIDA Screener, educators can print individual student reports from [WIDA AMS](#). A variety of other reports can be accessed through other systems. More information about these reports can be found in the [After Testing](#) module of this training guide.

Educators can use the [WIDA Interpretive Guide](#) to help them best understand the reports for students who took the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs. A similar guide is available for the WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. These interpretive guides can be found on the [Michigan page of the WIDA website](#). Under the Assess tab, select ACCESS for ELLs Scores and Reports.

All summative WIDA assessment results can be found in the OEAA Secure Site. The Kindergarten W-APT and WIDA Screener results will only appear in this site if educators have entered them for students.

Educators will also use the scores found in these reports to inform their decision about whether to identify a student as an EL or alert them to which

students were eligible to exit. By reviewing these reports in conjunction with the requirements and criteria outlined in the [MDE English Learner Program Entrance and Exit Protocol](#), educators can make these entrance and exiting decisions.

