

English Learner Guidebook



**Alabama State Department
of Education**

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*This resource represents a collaborative effort between
Instructional Services, Federal Programs, and Student Assessment.*

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English Learner (EL) Guidebook

This document, *English Learner (EL) Guidebook*, is an outgrowth of the Alabama State Department of Education's voluntary agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (Compliance Review #04-98-5023), for providing services to students who are English learners (ELs). It incorporates requirements and applicable references to Title III of the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016* (ESSA). This document is intended to provide basic requirements and guidance for policies, procedures, and practices for identifying, assessing, and serving ELs. Questions about the responsibilities of local education agencies (LEAs) in providing English language services may be directed to:

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Current Revisions

This list contains **major** additions, revisions, or changes reflected in this update.

YR	Page	Description of Change
2025	ALL	Test names changed to reflect WIDA revisions
	Part II	Due to the incorporation of the SARG into the ELRG, descriptive and procedural information related to State-approved screeners and ACCESS was moved out of Part II. All assessment information will be housed in Part IV.
	13	HLS Initial Enrollment in Alabama School
	14	Enrollment of 18-Year-Old English Learners
	15	Added Entering New Student Info in PowerSchool SIS and PSSP
	15	Enrollment Date in U.S. Schools Field in PowerSchool
	16	For 2025-2026 year, Alabama will not use WIDA Alternate Screener. Continue use of Alternate Screening Checklist.
	18	Added Consideration for State Coding section containing information on <i>Updating Immigrant Status in PowerSchool, Beginning of the Year Status Updates, Verifying and Updating EL Status During the School Year, and Initial Identification and Placement</i>
	18	Recommended Verification Schedule for EL Status
	22	Parent Waiver of Title III Services
	23	Importance of Tier I Instruction for ELs & EL Instructional Feedback/Reflection Tool
	25	Added Conversation Guide for Supporting English Learners
	28	Added WIDA Alternate ACCESS Exit Criteria
	29	Added WIDA Less Than Four Domains Exit Criteria
	29	Added Ellevation Monitoring Information
	29	Added comment on monitoring students who exit based on WIDA Alternate ACCESS
	30	Added remark (from SARG) regarding FELs and allowable accommodations on the state assessments
	42	Changes to Approved LIEP Models
	49	Updated State Requirements for Teaching English as a Second Language
	Part IV	Reorganized flow of assessment information from SARG in Part IV. Updated revised ACCESS information where possible.
	53	Note about requiring certified personnel to administer screeners effective 2026-2027
	54	Added WIDA Screeners: Determining the Appropriate Grade-Level Cluster Chart to Part IV
	56	Added Screening Students Who Previously Exited in Another WIDA State with Lower Exit Criteria
	56	Added Screening Potential ELs Enrolling from a Non-WIDA State
	62	Note added about requests for WIDA ACCESS Paper
	64	Note added on WIDA Alternate ACCESS request for permissions
	68	Updated ACAP Testing Supports Form Requirements
	71	Note Added About Requests for Less Than Four Domains Exemption
	73	Data Validation Process Updated
	83	Part V: Added information on updating immigrant status in PowerSchool
	84	Updated Key Terms for English Learners
	91	Links to Assessment Documents Added to Appendix

ELGB = English Learner Guidebook (2023)

SARG = Student Assessment Resource Guide (2023)

Preface

Equal Education Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Statement

It is the policy of the Alabama State Board of Education and the Alabama State Department of Education (SDE) that no student will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, religion, belief, national origin, ethnic group, or disability.

Introduction

The number of English learners in Alabama has increased significantly in recent years. This group of students includes U.S.-born children whose first language is other than English, immigrants, migrants, and individuals who are developing English proficiency. These children are in Alabama schools acquiring academic English that facilitates mastery of the content standards. Their ability to learn this content may be hampered by the lack of appropriate instruction and accommodations in the classroom. The SDE recognizes that there are national origin minority school children in the state who require services in order to become proficient in the English language and are classified as English learners. English learners are likely to have trouble with the dual weight of acquiring a language while learning academics taught in that language. These students are at a higher risk of dropping out of school and may consequently have reduced opportunities for employment.

The SDE is committed to providing all students equal opportunity to benefit from educational programs and services. Further, the SDE is committed to supporting evidence-based and effective programs, practices, training, and accountability so that all students can become proficient in English and achieve the State's academic content and standards. The SDE has the responsibility for implementing *Title III Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students* of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*.

The SDE is also responsible for enforcing Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which prohibits discrimination in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Local education agencies (LEAs) that receive federal financial assistance cannot discriminate, on the basis of race, color, or national origin. These Title VI regulatory requirements prohibit denial of equal access to education because of a student's limited proficiency in English, causing the possible inability to participate in or benefit from regular or special education instructional programs.

Consequently, LEAs may not:

- Provide services, financial aid, or other benefits **that are different** or in a different manner from what all students receive.
- **Restrict** an individual's enjoyment of an advantage or privilege enjoyed by others.
- **Deny an individual the right** to participate in federally assisted programs.
- **Hamper or substantially impede** the objectives of federally assisted programs

State Definition of Immigrant, Migrant & English Learners

Under ESSA, an **English Learner**, means an individual —

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C) who was not born in the United States, or whose native language is a language other than English;
 - (i)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas;
and
 - (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; **or**
 - (ii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; **and**
- (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual —
 - (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
 - (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; **or**
 - (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Under ESSA, the term “**Immigrant children and youth**”, means individuals who—

- (A) are aged 3-21;
- (B) were not born in any State; **and**
- (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.

The term “**Migrant**” when used with respect to an individual, means:

According to sections 1115(c)(1)(A) (incorporated into the MEP by sections 1304(c)(2), 1115(b), and 1309(3) of the ESEA, and 34 C.F.R. § 200.103(a)), a child is a “migratory child” if the following conditions are met.

1. The child is not older than 21 years of age; **and**
2.
 - a. The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under State law, **or**
 - b. The child is not yet at a grade level at which the LEA provides a free public education, **and**
3. The child made a qualifying move in the preceding 36 months as a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or did so with, or to join a parent/guardian or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; **and**
4. With regard to the qualifying move identified in paragraph 3, above, the child moved due to economic necessity from one residence to another residence, and —
 - a. From one school district to another; **or**
 - b. In a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; **or**
 - c. Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence.

Legal Cases Relating to English Learners

1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." - 42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

Lau vs. Nichols (US Supreme Court Decision 1974)

"The failure of the San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program, and thus violates §601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based "on the ground of race, color, or national origin," in "any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance," and the implementing regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Pp. 414 U. S. 565-569."

Plyler vs. Doe (U.S. Supreme Court Decision 1982)

"The illegal aliens who are plaintiffs in these cases challenging the statute may claim the benefit of the Equal Protection Clause, which provides that no State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" . . . The undocumented status of these children does not establish a sufficient rational basis for denying them benefits that the State affords other residents . . . No national policy is perceived that might justify the State in denying these children an elementary education." -457 U.S. 202

Castañeda vs. Pickard, [5th Cir., 1981] 648 F.2d 989 (US COURT OF APPEALS)

"In 1981, in the most significant decision regarding the education of language-minority students since Lau v. Nichols, the 5th Circuit Court established a three-pronged test for evaluating programs serving English language learners. According to the Castañeda standard, schools must base their program on educational theory recognized as sound or considered to be a legitimate experimental strategy, – implement the program with resources and personnel necessary to put the theory into practice, and – evaluate programs and make adjustments where necessary to ensure that adequate progress is being made. [648 F. 2d 989 (5th Circuit, 1981)]."

Additional laws, court decisions, and memoranda related to English learners can be located in the [Appendix](#) of this document.

Part I: Alabama Framework for English Learner Success

Alabama developed the Framework for English Learner Success to make needed shifts to instructional practices that lead to English learner success. This plan is aligned with the Priority Areas of the Alabama Achieves Strategic Plan and is designed with the goal of helping children find success in school and their lives thereafter.

The Alabama Framework for English Learner Success focuses on closing the achievement gap between English learners and their English-speaking peers and attaining English language proficiency. The core principles of the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success center upon four principles for EL success.

These Principles are:

1. Asset-Oriented System
2. High-Quality Instructional System
3. Conditions that Support Responsive Educators and Staff
4. Alignment and Coherence Within and Across Systems that Support ELs

The ALSDE State Implementation Team analyzed current State practices and determined areas of strength and growth to strategically increase outcomes for English learners. This framework is intended to support EL students at all levels of the educational system. Five Strategic Goals were identified that provide specific steps to focus efforts to achieve lasting improvements efficiently and effectively.

The Strategic Goals are:

Strategic Goal 1
Increase the use of high-quality instruction and assessment in every classroom every day to engage ELs
Strategic Goal 2
Foster and build the capacity of all school and district staff to serve ELs
Strategic Goal 3
Establish, communicate, and implement coherent and equitable systems
Strategic Goal 4
Utilize data and research to refine EL education in order to provide individualized and systematic supports
Strategic Goal 5
Mobilize and actively engage families, caregivers, community members, and the public to support ELs

Source: [Alabama Framework for English Learner Success](#)

High-Quality Instruction and Assessment for ELs Guidance (HQIA)

Strategic Goal 1 focuses on increasing the use of high-quality instruction and assessment in every classroom, every day to engage ELs. Part of this goal has been the development of the *HQIA for ELs Guidance* (HQIA).

Implementation of HQIA

The ALSDE partners with LEAs to support schools with high-quality instruction and assessment that aligns with the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success. Training is available in a variety of formats. Training opportunities will be communicated with LEAs.

Through this partnership we create:

- Supports for educators to continually improve their use of evidence-based practices to effectively teach English learners
- Equitable academic outcomes for English learners
- Sustainable processes and organizational structures that will last through changes in staff and administration

Focus of HQIA

HQIA Guidance for ELs is comprised of five criteria:

1. Asset-Based Instruction
2. Student-Centered Engagement
3. Academic Discourse
4. Scaffolding
5. Formative Assessment

Professional learning on HQIA includes exploration of each criterion and their corresponding indicators along with coaching support to increase educators' use of high-quality, evidence-based practices for teaching English learners in the content area and ESL classroom environments.

The criteria identified in HQIA directly align with the four principles set forth in the Alabama Framework for English Learner Success as shown in the graphic

ALSDE Guidance for HQIA for ELs



Part II: Guidance for Local Education Agencies Serving English Learners

Identification, Enrollment, And Screening Procedures



Figure 1: Identification Procedures for English Learners

Home Language Survey

English learners (ELs) **must** be identified at the point of enrollment. A consistent enrollment procedure for identifying language-minority students, which includes the use of a Home Language Survey (HLS), facilitates their entry into the new school environment. A language-minority student is one whose home language is other than English. It is vital to have trained school personnel who are dedicated to meeting the needs of students from different cultures with different levels of English proficiency.

A Home Language Survey (HLS) must be completed and entered in PowerSchool at the time of a student's **initial** enrollment in an Alabama public school. LEAs should not require families to complete a new HLS during subsequent school years or annual registration processes.

It is beneficial to conduct an interview with the student and/or parents during the enrollment process. Information such as limited or interrupted formal education, emotional trauma, cultural awareness, and other special circumstances will support the EL committee decisions when considering the development of the individual English language plan for the student. The assistance of an interpreter or translator may be required to complete the interview and survey. The completed survey becomes part of the student's permanent record and should be available for future reference.

The Home Language Survey contains, at a minimum, a version of the following questions:

- What language is spoken by you and your family most of the time?
- Is your child's native language anything other than English?
- What is the language the student first acquired?

It is recommended that Districts use the State-approved HLS available in PowerSchool Enrollment. PowerSchool provides options for the HLS in English and Spanish. For additional languages, translated versions are available in **TransACT (changing to Pathwise) Parent Notices**. Questions should not be added, deleted, or edited. The questions on the State-approved HLS are based on federal guidance to assist districts with compliance with federal law related to the identification of English learners.

When all responses on the HLS indicate that English is the only language used by the student and by individuals in the home, the student is considered an English-only speaker. Procedures established by the school system for placement in the general student population should be

followed. If any response on the HLS indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home, then further assessment must be conducted to determine the student's English-language proficiency level. However, the presence of a language other than English does not automatically signify that the student is not a proficient speaker of English.

It is essential that enrollment personnel are trained on the importance of using forms in a language that parents and/or guardians understand. Interpretation supports, such as MasterWord, may also be utilized for interviewing the parent and during the enrollment process to ensure that non-English-speaking caregivers understand all aspects of the enrollment process and the intent and purpose of the Home Language Survey. Thorough training of essential enrollment personnel and the use of translated documents and forms minimizes the risk of misidentifying students as potential English learners and/or erroneously screening students for English proficiency.

Enrollment

All language-minority students must be allowed to attend school, regardless of their ability to produce a birth certificate, social security number, or immigration documentation. Children may not be excluded from school because they do not have a social security number (*Plyler v. Doe*). Application forms to obtain social security numbers may be distributed, but the option of completing the forms must be left to the parents.

If parents do not have student immunization records available, the dates of immunization may be obtained by calling the previous school that the child attended. The LEA may need to contact the former school system. If necessary, students can begin the immunization series at the local public health department. *If appropriate immunization documentation cannot be obtained within a reasonable period, the student's case should be handled in accordance with approved State and local board of education procedures.*

Enrollment of 18-Year-Old English Learners

Under Federal law, State and local educational agencies are required to provide all children with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary level. School officials may request documentation that a student falls within the school district's minimum and maximum age requirements.

1. **With school records:** Enroll students with high school records from their previous school. Obtain and translate transcripts, audit transcript with student interview to interpret prior schooling experience, identify student's educational goals, make decisions about placement, and award credits. If you have questions about grade placement, cohort, or unaccompanied minors, contact a member of the Instructional Services team that works with attendance and high school graduation requirements.
2. **Without school records:** For prospective students that are 18 years and older that do not have copies of their school records, you must conduct a family interview with the student to review their educational history and educational goals. Re-create student's academic histories through intake forms and interviews with family or guardian. Administer appropriate competency-based exam to make credit and placement decisions.

3. **Limited or interrupted schooling or no prior secondary schooling:** For prospective students that do not have secondary schooling, you must conduct a family interview with the student to gather information about their schooling history and determine their educational goals. If they desire to obtain a high school diploma, discuss the time commitment including any summer study needed to graduate with their cohort. Helping your potential student identify their goals and clearly outlining the time commitment and attendance expectations to meet high school graduation requirements will determine if they are ready to work toward a high school diploma or if they are better suited to an adult ESL and GED learning path. Provide information about available adult ESL and citizenship classes in your area. Our community college system offers free adult ESL classes as well as many churches and organizations across our state.

Source: [Alabama Attendance Manual 2024-2025](#)

Entering New Student Info in PowerSchool SIS and Special Programs

After receiving records from previous school OR screening new EL students, those identified as English learners should be entered into PowerSchool SIS and Special Programs. See [Alabama PowerSchool Special Programs - LiveBinder](#) for more information on this process.

Information entered into PowerSchool should sync overnight, and the student should then appear in Ellevation. Do not add new students directly into Ellevation, or a duplicate record will be created.

Note: In PowerSchool, the field for “US Entry” is now “Enrollment Date in US Schools.” This entry should reflect the student’s first date of enrollment in US schools.

Enrollment Support: Translation and Interpretation Services

LEAs have the responsibility to communicate with families in a language they understand. LEAs should have a plan in place to facilitate communication so that all families have access and support. Enrollment forms should be in a language that parents and/or guardians understand.

It is also important to remember that students who do not qualify as English learners may have parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English and may have limited English proficiency in one of the four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

SEAs and LEAs have an obligation to communicate meaningfully with parents and to notify parents adequately of information about any program, service, or activity called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English. This may include, but not be limited to, information about language assistance programs, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, requests for parent permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, gifted and talented programs, and magnet and charter schools.

School districts must develop and implement a process for determining whether parents have limited English proficiency or additional language needs. Successful communication provides parents the school-related information they need to make informed decisions about, and be helpful participants in, their children’s education.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2017). *English Learner Tool Kit* (2nd rev. ed.).

To supplement the language support services offered by the LEA, the SDE currently offers supplemental assistance for language access. Translated forms are available in a variety of languages through the **TransACT (changing to Pathwise)** database. Any LEA employee in Alabama with a valid district email address can create an account by self-registering on the website.

MasterWord is a resource provided by the SDE that provides access to video remote interpretation services and limited document translation services. MasterWord interpretation and translation services may be used to facilitate the enrollment process. To obtain training and credentials for MasterWord contact your **ALSDE English Learner Education Specialist**.

MasterWord is an additional tool provided by the SDE to assist districts in their responsibility to provide communications in a language understood by the parents. MasterWord does not replace the districts' responsibilities to provide language access; therefore, districts may choose to utilize additional tools and personnel for purposes not covered under our current MasterWord plan.

The SDE's contracts with TransACT (changing to Pathwise) and MasterWord are renewed on an annual basis and are contingent on continued funding.

Initial Language Proficiency Assessment and Program Placement

Alabama is a member of the WIDA Consortium and has adopted the WIDA Screener Online to determine eligibility for placement for students in grades 1-12, and the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten for students in kindergarten and first semester 1st graders.

WIDA Consortium Members Not Included in Map

Alaska, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, Palau, Bureau of Indian Education, Department of Defense Education Activity

Initial assessment of English language proficiency is conducted using WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement decisions.



For the 2025-2026 school year, Alabama will not use the WIDA Alternate Screener in instances where potential ELs cannot participate meaningfully on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online, even with accommodations. Instead, LEAs will continue use of the **Alternate Screener Checklist** for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

For more information on these State-approved screening instruments and procedures, refer to [Part IV of this document](#).

Foreign Exchange Students

The district will provide a HLS to any foreign exchange student who enrolls in school. If the foreign exchange student has a language other than English identified on the HLS, the foreign exchange student will be administered the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online.

There are no special exceptions for Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who are English learners for the purposes of English Language Proficiency assessments if they attend school in the United States. Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who qualify as English learners must receive ESL services, and, if applicable, Title III supplemental services.

Foreign Exchange students **are included in the State's immigrant count** for Title III funding purposes:

- If the Foreign Exchange student is also an English learner, s/he would be included in an LEA's count of EL students for the Title III formula subgrant.
- If the Foreign Exchange student meets the definition of "immigrant" student under section 3201(5) of ESEA, s/he would also be included in an LEA's count of immigrant children and youth.
- If the Foreign Exchange student qualifies as an English learner, they must participate in the Title I required assessments, including the ELP assessment WIDA ACCESS. Foreign exchange students will also participate on any of the state's content assessments.

Timelines for Screening, Determination of Eligibility, Placement, and Parent Notification

During registration, parents complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify the student's primary language(s). When a student registers, the following steps should be taken:

1. Review responses on Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify potential ELs.
2. Administer the appropriate WIDA English language proficiency (ELP) screener to potential ELs.
3. Identify if the student meets the State EL eligibility criteria for English as a Second Language services. (See [Qualifying Scores for Potential ELs](#))
4. Place identified EL students in appropriate language instruction educational program.
5. For students enrolled by the beginning of the school year, the district must notify parents of their child's English learner identification and eligibility for participation in the language development program within 30 calendar days after the beginning of the district's school year.
6. If a student enrolls **during the school year and is a first-time enrollee in a U.S. school**, then the LEA has 30 days to screen and notify parents.
7. **For other students identified as English learners entering/transferring during the school year**, parents must receive notification of language instruction program eligibility within two weeks of enrollment.
8. Report student status in PowerSchool. For more information about data management please refer to [PowerSchool: The Alabama Edition](#).

Under ESEA/ESSA Sec. 3113(b)(2), every effort should be made to identify students who are EL students as soon as possible to provide timely support for students who may be in need of language services. (See September 23, 2016, Nonregulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III, Addendum Selected Topic 2.)

Refer to [Part IV of this document](#) for additional information on available screeners and assessment policy and procedures.

Considerations for State Coding for ELs

With all the data processing occurring in PowerSchool, we encourage you to review data regularly throughout the school year to ensure your data is valid. Any data discrepancies discovered must be changed in PowerSchool.

Updating Immigrant Status in PowerSchool

Immigrant status must be monitored and updated annually in PowerSchool. A student is considered an immigrant for reporting purposes only during their first three years in U.S. schools.

Once a student has completed **three full academic years** in U.S. schools, the **immigrant status checkbox should be unchecked** in PowerSchool to reflect the change. *Please note that the years need not be consecutive. Regularly reviewing this data ensures accurate federal reporting and program compliance.

Visit [PowerSchool-Alabama Edition](#) for more information and resources on this topic

Verifying and Updating EL Status During the School Year in PowerSchool
PowerSchool: The Alabama Edition

To ensure accurate data and reporting, it is critical that:

- EL status is accurately entered at time of enrollment
- EL status is accurately entered before completing the I-ELP
- EL status is **checked regularly for updates needed during the year** (EL1 to EL 2, FEL-2 to FEL-3, etc.). It is recommended that this data be verified at a minimum of 2-3 times per year.

Recommended Verification Schedule	
Beginning of Year	Update status for new year (EL1 to EL 2, as needed; FELs; exited students, etc.)
Middle of Year	EL1 to EL2, as needed; verify & clean up any discrepancies for all students.
End of Year	EL1 to EL2, as needed; verify & clean up any discrepancies for all students before the end of the year data collection. Note: It is important to remember that student EL Status codes for the new school year should not be changed in PowerSchool when <i>WIDA ACCESS</i> scores are released in the spring. LEAs must wait until the key dates memo is communicated from ALSDE. This process is typically finalized by the end of June or early July. Please wait for notification from the SDE before updating students' EL status codes in PowerSchool. For more information on end of the year status updates, see the End of Year Resources section at PowerSchool - The Alabama Edition.

Verify student data for the current school year in the Student Data tile in AIM (under the "Federal Programs" tab) and make any necessary changes in PowerSchool.

Initial Identification and Placement

Upon identification and placement, the student's designation as an English learner should be entered into PowerSchool along with their corresponding EL status (EL-1, EL-2, FEL, NOMPLOTE, etc.). For resources on this topic, visit the [ALSDE Data Code Manual](#) found within [PowerSchool: The Alabama Edition](#).

State Codes for English Learners and Data Collection

The table below contains codes for the EL Status Descriptions used in PowerSchool along with a definition of codes.

EL Status Codes	Definitions of Codes
Non-ELs	Students whose home language surveys do not indicate a language other than English spoken in the home. These are not students classified as NOMPLOTE.
EL-1 EL Year 1	English learner students who are in their first year in a U.S. school.
EL-2 EL Year 2 or more	English learner students who are in their second year or more in a U.S. school.
FEL-1 1st Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their first year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-2 2nd Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their second year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-3 3rd Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their third year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-4 4th Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their fourth year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL Completed 4 Years Monitoring	Former English learner students who have successfully completed four years of monitoring and are no longer English learners.
NOMPLOTE	National Origin Minority Student Whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English. These students have a non-English language background but are fluent in English and do not require ESL services. Parents, however, may need information in their home language.

English learners whose parents have waived Title III services will still be coded in PowerSchool as English learners. These students should have an additional entry into the "EL Waived Title III Services" field in PowerSchool indicating their waiver option. These students must be assessed on the WIDA ACCESS English proficiency test until they are proficient in English with a composite score of 4.8 or above. For more information on Parent Waivers see [Part II of this document](#).

View the [ALSDE Data Code Manual](#) found within [PowerSchool: The Alabama Edition](#) for the most up to date information on entering and coding student status in PowerSchool.

Misidentification of an EL

There may be some instances where misidentification of an EL can occur. For example, the HLS may be misinterpreted by parent/guardian(s) or by the educator reviewing the information, which could lead to misidentification. This same misinterpretation is possible as educators review initial screening assessment scores, also resulting in misidentification. If it is suspected that a student has been inaccurately identified as an EL, contact ALSDE EL Administrator, Maria Franco via email at maria.franco@alsde.edu or by phone at (334) 694-4922 for guidance.

Individual English Language Plan and Procedures

Individual English Language Plan

It is highly recommended, due to *Castañeda vs. Pickard* and ESEA Section 3113(b)(2) of Title III of the *ESSA of 2016*, that each student designated as EL have an Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP) which should be updated annually until the student achieves Former EL (FEL) status.

Individual English Language Plans (I-ELPs) & Ellevation

1. In order to provide a uniform platform to create and communicate I-ELPs, access to Ellevation is provided to all districts by the SDE. **I-ELPs are required to be completed in the Ellevation platform.**
2. Ellevation is used to create student Individual English Language Plans (I-ELP), track student progress over time, generate reports, monitor students, plan for instruction, and collaborate with colleagues. For information and/or training on Ellevation, please contact your [ALSDE English Learner Education Specialist](#) or visit the [Alabama Ellevation website](#).
3. I-ELPs in Ellevation are required to include the following items:
 - a. Student demographic information
 - b. Most Recent Test Results (May include the following- Kindergarten screener, WIDA Online Screener, and/or ACCESS scores)
 - c. WIDA Can Do Indicators
 - d. EL Services and Programs
 - e. State Testing Accommodations
Decisions regarding appropriate State-assessment accommodations for EL students should be made on an individual basis by the EL Committee. The EL Committee should consider the content and nature of each specific assessment and the level of the student's language proficiency when making decisions about appropriate accommodations for assessments and the students' instructional program.

Note: Refer to [Part IV of this document](#) and the ASAP Manual for additional information and requirements on State Testing Accommodations for I-ELPs, including accessibility supports and/or accommodations allowed on State assessments for students whose parents/guardians waived Title III Language Assistance Services (added from former assessment FAQ).
 - f. Instructional Accommodations
Instructional accommodations are recommended for use during regular classroom instruction, assignments, and assessments. They should be based on proficiency levels and individual student needs. **For more information on instructional accommodations, see the Instructional Accommodations section below.**
 - g. Language Goals

Refer to [Part IV of this document](#) for additional information and requirements on State Testing Accommodations for I-ELPs.

Instructional Accommodations

Instructional accommodations and supports should occur as part of Tier I classroom instruction, classroom assignments, and classroom assessments. They should be flexible and responsive to student needs. These may be updated as needed to reflect the needs of the student. It is good practice to reconvene with the EL Committee to discuss necessary adjustments and document when changes are made.

When determining appropriate instructional accommodations and supports, data should be considered from a variety of sources. Teacher input, academic performance, and historical assessment data from WIDA ACCESS and other assessment sources may be considered. Accommodations should be selected that help reduce the language barrier and provide the student with access to content area instruction. Care should be taken to ensure that high-quality instruction and assessment practices are implemented and that the appropriate level of support needed by the student is determined to avoid over or under-accommodation.

Parent Notification

According to ESEA section 1112(3)(A) Title III requirements, districts must, not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, or two weeks if later in the school year, provide notification to parent(s) of ELs identified for participation in an English language instruction educational program of:

1. The reasons for the identification.
2. The child's level of English proficiency.
 - How such level was assessed.
 - The status of the child's academic achievement.
3. The method of instruction used in the program.
4. How the program will meet the educational strengths and needs of the child.
5. How the program will specifically help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation.
6. The specific exit requirements for such program, expected rate of transition from such program into the regular education classroom, and the expected rate of graduation from secondary school.
7. In the case of a child with a disability, how the program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child.
8. Information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance detailing:
 - The right of the parents to have their child immediately removed from Title III programs upon request.
 - The options that parents have to decline to enroll their child in such Title III programs or to choose another program or method of instruction if available.
 - The various programs and methods of instruction if more than one program or method is offered by the eligible entity.

It is recommended for LEAs to have a plan in place to notify parents whose children underwent screening and were not identified as an English learner.

Ellevation Report and Parent Letter Gallery

To help schools comply with notification requirements, a variety of parent letters are available in the Ellevation Platform. Parent letters are available in 35 languages and include the following:

- EL Committee Meeting Parent/Guardian Invitation Letter
- Notification of Not Qualifying for English Language Program
- Notification of English Language Program Exit
- Notification of Initial English Language Program Placement
- Notification of English Language Program Continuation

To access these forms, click **Reports** and then **Report & Parent Letter Gallery**.

Parent Waiver of Title III Services

Some parents of students identified as ELs may choose to waive Title III Language Assistance services for their child. However, this does not negate the responsibility of the LEA to provide language support under the Office of Civil Rights law. The LEA must find alternate means of providing the student with support for language development and proficiency outside of the structured ESL classes that may include pull out or push in services. Parents who choose to waive services must do so in writing on an annual basis, and the LEA must maintain the written documentation.*

**Title I and Title III both bestow parents of ELs with the right to deny their child's participation in language instruction programs. This is a possibility that LEAs should take very seriously. LEAs should recognize that a parent's decision to waive a child's right to services does not waive the LEA's civil rights obligation to help the student overcome the linguistic barriers that have already been identified. Once a student is identified as an EL, the school must offer accommodations in core classes to help the student overcome linguistic barriers and access the core curriculum.*

Students who will not receive Title III language services must still participate in WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments in order to determine the student's level of English proficiency and to provide educators with valuable information attained from test scores so that appropriate supports may be provided. ELs whose parent/guardian(s) have chosen to waive services will still be eligible for the appropriate EL accommodations on state assessments.

Although parent/guardian(s) may choose to waive Title III Language Assistance services, the student will be identified and coded as an EL in PowerSchool and will continue to be coded as EL until the student attains a 4.8 composite score on WIDA ACCESS or an alternate score on WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

A parent meeting is required to explain the screener scores, why the student qualified for services, what services are available to the student had those services not been waived, how the student will be supported in the classroom, and why participation on WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS cannot be waived and is federally required.

School districts may not recommend that parents decline all or some services within an EL program for any reason, including facilitating scheduling of special education services or other scheduling reasons. A parent's decision to opt out of an EL program or particular EL services must be knowing and voluntary. Thus, school districts must provide guidance in a language parents can understand to ensure that parents understand their child's rights, the range of EL services that their child could receive, and the benefits of such services before voluntarily waiving them.

An I-ELP will still need to be created for these students. I-ELPs will denote the parent waived services and will be reviewed annually with the parent/guardian(s)' request for attendance. If the parent/guardian(s) refuse to attend, the I-ELP will remain in place until the student demonstrates English proficiency, which is a 4.8 composite score on WIDA ACCESS. Refer to the WIDA Alternate ACCESS Exit Criteria located in Section 4 of the Student Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners for exit criteria for this assessment.

For additional information on this topic, refer to [Part IV of this document](#) and [Chapter 7 of the English Learner Tool Kit](#) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2017)).

Placement In General Education Setting

General Education

The goal for students who are ELs is that they attain fluency in English, master the State's academic content standards as demonstrated by proficiency on the State's required student assessments, and pass any other current State-required tests.

ELs should be placed age-appropriately in the mainstream classroom. This provides them with access to challenging, grade-level content instruction and the opportunity to interact with their English-speaking peers and is considered to be the least restrictive educational environment.

At the high school level, credits should be awarded based on transcripts provided by the students/parents, even if the coursework was taken in another country. **If transcripts are in a language other than English**, translations should be sought so that credits can be awarded. Schools may request the translation of student transcripts or other enrollment documents by contacting their [ALSDE English Learner Education Specialist](#).

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

English learners are eligible to participate in advanced placement courses; however, according to the College Board Advanced Placement Program, accommodations for ELs are not permitted on AP Exams. Please note that ELs enrolled in AP courses should receive classroom accommodations so that they have access to content. It is important that this information is shared with parents and students.

Systems of Support for English Learners

Importance of Tier I Instruction for ELs

Tier I instruction is the foundation for academic success for all students, including English learners (ELs). For this reason, it is important that all professionals who support ELs are knowledgeable about best practices for delivering high-quality instruction and assessment. Tier I instruction for ELs includes content area instruction as well as any additional ESL services received in accordance with the student's I-ELP. When teachers make instruction comprehensible (Krashen, 1982) and differentiate by proficiency level, it allows ELs access to grade-level content and standards while simultaneously helping to develop language (WIDA, 2020).

Sources: Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.; WIDA. (2020). *WIDA English language development standards framework*,

EL Instructional Feedback/Reflection Tool

To support educators in strengthening practices in Tier I instruction, the State has developed an **EL Instructional Feedback/Reflection Tool**. This tool is not intended to be used for evaluative purposes. Instead, it is recommended to be used by teachers and/or administrators to reflect on current practices and ensure that instruction effectively address the linguistic and academic needs of EL students. This tool can be used to help educators and administrators identify strengths in Tier I instruction for ELs and areas for potential growth.

There are multiple ways this tool could be utilized. For example, teachers may use this tool for self-reflection; or they may collaborate with other colleagues, such as the EL teacher, to gain insight into current practices and how to incorporate additional practices into content instruction. Administrators may use this tool to gather input for individual teacher feedback or to drive professional development planning at the teacher and/or school level.

Additionally, ALSDE English Learner Education Specialists are available to support efforts to build capacity for serving English learners across the State. To learn more about professional development or coaching opportunities focused on Tier 1 strategies for ELs, please contact your **ALSDE English Learner Education Specialist** for guidance and support.

School-Level English Learner Committee

LEAs should outline procedures for the establishment of an English Learner (EL) Committee at the school level. The EL Committee is a school team responsible for guiding and monitoring the placement, services, progress, and assessment of students who are ELs.

Members of the EL Committee may include classroom teachers, counselors, instructional specialists, school administrators, ESL staff, and other members as appropriate (e.g., parents, central office administrators, support staff). Although there is nothing to prohibit members of the *Response to Instruction (Rtl)* or *Problem Solving Team (PST)* from participating on EL Committees, ***these committees serve very different purposes.***

Responsibilities of the EL Committee

1. Ensure full consideration of each student's language background before placement in an English language instruction educational program.
2. Ensure implementation of systematic procedures and safeguards related to appropriateness of identification, placement, notice of eligibility, assessment, transcript review, scheduling, instructional and support programs, and program exit.
3. Review student's progress in language acquisition and academic achievement regularly.
4. Convene as needed to discuss changes or adjustments in the ELs instructional services.
5. Identify accommodations needed on State assessments. Additional classroom strategies and accommodations should be identified as appropriate.
6. Communicate in a timely manner the student's I-ELP with faculty and staff who interact with and provide instruction for the child.
7. Ensure there is a process for determining how **the school will communicate** with the student's parents in a language the parent can understand.
8. Reconvene, when necessary, to review students' progress and adjust instructional and assessment accommodations to suit the needs of the student.

9. Ensure there is a process for monitoring FELs 1-4. The EL Committee may reconvene to address needs that may arise for FELs 1-4 during the four-year monitoring period.

Conversation Guide for Supporting English Learners

As schools work to provide appropriate academic and behavioral supports for English learners in Tier I and beyond, it is essential that decisions regarding ELs are informed by a comprehensive understanding of a variety of factors that may affect an EL's performance. To assist educators and support teams in identifying and understanding these relevant factors, the ALSDE has developed the **Conversation Guide for Supporting English Learners**.

The **Conversation Guide for Supporting English Learners** offers structured, reflective questions to help educators and support teams consider key aspects of an EL's personal background, educational experience, academic performance, language proficiency, overall well-being, cross-cultural factors, etc. This tool supports reflection on multiple factors that may be impacting a student's performance in Tier I instruction. It helps identify areas where additional support may be needed and facilitates collaborative, data-driven conversations and decision-making focused on student success.

Although the Conversation Guide is particularly helpful when a student is demonstrating signs of difficulty, it is not limited to reactive use. The guide can also be used proactively during EL Committee meetings, data reviews, PLCs, and collaborative planning sessions to make timely adjustments to instruction and accommodations. By addressing student needs early, it can help prevent the need for Tier II or Tier III interventions.

In the event that support beyond Tier I becomes necessary, the guide can serve as a valuable resource for planning interventions for additional tiered support within the Problem-Solving Team (PST) process. It helps teams evaluate whether appropriate accommodations have been consistently applied, pinpoint specific support needs, and ensure ELs receive opportunities to succeed within a multi-tiered system of support.

While it is not necessary to address every single item in every section of this resource, numerous unanswered questions in a particular category may indicate that more information is needed on the topic before ruling out its effect on student performance. The questions are intended to serve as conversation starters, to guide thinking and decision-making, and to promote a collaborative, student-centered approach to addressing student needs.

Along with the guiding questions, this tool provides linked resources related to each category to help educators make informed decisions. Additionally, your **ALSDE English Learner Education Specialist** is available to provide professional learning and coaching related to building capacity for supporting English learners.

The Role of the Problem Solving Team (PST)

The Problem Solving Team (PST) process plays a central role in the implementation of academic, behavioral, and foundational wellness supports for all students. Academic supports for all students are met through the implementation of Response to Instruction (RTI); the purpose of RTI is to combine standards-based core instruction, assessment, and interventions within a multi-tier system of supports to increase student achievement through eliminating barriers of teaching and learning. The PST is responsible for guiding supports and interventions for any student at risk of facing barriers to academic, behavioral, and/or foundational wellness success. A student is considered at-risk if their grades in core subject areas (English Language Arts,

Mathematics, Science, and/or Social Studies) are below C, if they score below proficient on State standardized assessments, if they have chronic absenteeism, chronic behavioral referrals, and so on. Although a referral to PST is a required step prior to special education testing, a PST referral is not used only for pre-special education testing purposes.

ELs should not be referred to PST if language is the only barrier to achievement. Differentiated instruction should be provided for a reasonable amount of time to include instructional accommodations in accordance with the student's I-ELP. Other data sources may also be considered and reviewed to determine that the barrier is not related to language or the student's lack of instruction.

Root cause strategies are a preferred method for eliminating potential contributing barriers to student success and determining the cause of limited student performance. Upon determination that limited language proficiency is not the cause inhibiting English learner growth and performance, EL students are served in the same ways as their peers. EL students receive on grade-level instruction through robust Tier I, remediation as needed through targeted Tier II, and intensive intervention if required through Tier III in all academic and non-academic areas. EL staff members are a vital part of the PST team and their insights into the needs of EL students assist the team in selecting the appropriate instruction, remediation, and extension to meet individual student needs. Prior to consideration for special education services referral, all students, including English learners, must be served through the PST process with documented tiered instruction and intervention. The PST team may need to seek specialized training in order to write appropriate strategies or accommodations for students whose primary language is other than English (See *Lau v Nichols*).

The EL and PST committees are separate entities but may include some of the same members. In smaller school districts, there are a limited number of personnel available for these important roles. The issue is not the duplication of personnel on the committees; it is the purpose of the committees. Appropriate personnel to serve on the PST Committee include content-area or general classroom teachers of ELs, assessment specialists, school administrators, school counselors, and ESL staff.

For more information regarding grading and retention, see [Part III of this document](#). Refer to the [Guidance Manual for Problem Solving Team \(2025\)](#) for issues pertaining to ELs in the PST process.

ELs and the Special Education Process

There is often great uncertainty regarding the referral of EL students for Special Education Services. EL students who are determined eligible for special education services have the right to the same individualized special education services as other students with disabilities. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (Public Law 108-446) requires that State and local education agencies ensure that students are assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability prior to determining eligibility. The materials and procedures used to assess a non-English-speaking student must be selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which the student has a disability and needs special education – rather than measuring the student's English language skills.

Care should be taken to ensure that the lack of English proficiency is not the basis for a referral for Special Education Services. The *Alabama Administrative Code (290-8-9.04) (1)(e)* states that in order for an EL student to be deemed eligible, the Eligibility Committee (I-ELP Committee/IEP

Team) must determine that **the disability is not the result of learning English as a second language** and that the disability exists in the child's native language and is not the result of learning English as a second language. A child may not be determined to be eligible for special education services if the determinant factor is the child's lack of instruction in reading, math, or lack of English proficiency. The IEP Team should consider the language needs of the student as those needs relate to the student's IEP.

Parent/Guardian(s) participation is required at all IEP/I-ELP meetings. To ensure full participation of the parent/guardian(s), supports may need to be provided so that the parent/guardian(s) understand what is being discussed. This may also be necessary for parent/guardian(s) of students who are *National Origin of Minority Whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English (NOMPHLOTE)*. These supports must include an Interpreter for oral communication and written communication in the parent/guardian(s) native language.

For more information on this topic, refer to [English Learners with Disabilities and Special Education Services](#) in this document and the [Mastering the Maze: The Special Education Process](#) and [English Learners \(ELs\) with Disabilities - LiveBinder](#).

Annual ACCESS Testing, Exit Criteria, And Monitoring

In order to determine if ELs are progressing toward the attainment of the English language, WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS are administered annually to all EL students in Grades K-12, including those whose parents/guardians have waived services. Students who have attained English language proficiency (4.8 composite score) and are coded as FEL-1, FEL-2, FEL-3, or FEL-4 WILL NOT take either of these assessments.

Alabama is a member of the WIDA Consortium and has adopted the WIDA ACCESS, WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten, and WIDA Alternate ACCESS as its assessment options for measuring progress in English language proficiency. Students are tested annually in four domains and receive composite scores and scale scores for each language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as overall composite and scale scores for all domains combined.

Test scores can be used to develop student I-ELPs, monitor student progress annually, determine trends in historical growth by comparing two or more years, inform classroom instruction, and guide decision-making processes.

For more information on annual testing procedures, test versions, training and administration requirements, score interpretation, etc., see [Part IV of this document](#).

Exit Criteria for WIDA ACCESS

Alabama has determined that EL students who achieve a 4.8 composite score on WIDA ACCESS are considered to be English language proficient. These students will exit the program and will no longer receive English language support services. At such time, an EL student has exited, the student will be classified as an FEL-1 and will be monitored for four years.

Students who have exited may continue to receive the same EL accommodations on State assessments as they did while they were classified as an EL 1 or EL 2. **FELs may receive any of the allowable accommodations on the State assessments as long as they are used**

regularly in the classroom and are written into an I-ELP for the student. At the end of the four-year monitoring period, the student will no longer receive EL accommodations. Again, it is important to remember that the EL Status codes in PowerSchool should not be changed to reflect an exited student’s FEL status upon release of WIDA ACCESS scores in the spring. It is essential to wait until the key dates memo is communicated by ALSDE.

For more information regarding EL Status Codes and Descriptions, refer to [Part II of this document](#). For more information on PowerSchool, please visit [PowerSchool-The Alabama Edition](#).

Transition from EL Program Services

EL students who make an overall proficiency level of **4.8** on WIDA ACCESS will exit the EL program. If a student does not make an overall proficiency score of 4.8 they will continue receiving English language services.



Students who make the required score to exit from ESL services are placed on monitoring status for **four** academic years. EL stakeholders and teachers must communicate regularly during the monitoring phase. ***It is recommended that EL stakeholders and teachers communicate at least once each nine weeks during the first year and at least once each semester during consecutive years with documentation to ensure that the exited student is functioning successfully in the mainstream classroom.*** Students are classified as Former English Learners Monitoring Years 1-4 (**FEL-1-4**) during this monitoring period. Upon successful completion of four years of monitoring, ELs are classified Former English Learner (**FEL**) and are no longer included in the EL subgroup for accountability purposes.

Alternate Exit Criteria for WIDA Alternate Access

The following cut scores for WIDA Alternate ACCESS (*Alternate ACCESS*) are listed below. These scores are based on the WIDA standard setting event conducted in 2024. As additional data is collected and additional information is released by WIDA, cut scores may be adjusted accordingly.

Grade-Level Cluster	Scale Score	Exit Criteria
K-2	910-937	Scores must fall within the designated range for each grade-level cluster for three consecutive years.
3-5	910-937	
6-8	910-937	
9-12	910-937	

Grade-Level Cluster	Scale Score	Exit Criteria
K-2	938-951	Scores must fall within the designated range for each grade-level cluster for two consecutive years.
3-5	938-949	
6-8	938-950	
9-12	938-949	

Alternate Exit Criteria for WIDA Alternate Access: Less Than Four Domains Tested

In instances where a student is missing a test score in up to two domains related to their disability, composite & scale scores may be calculated using reweighted formulas that redistribute the weight across the tested domains. Students must have tested in at least two language domains to calculate a composite score. **To determine if a student who tests in less than four domains qualifies for exit from the ESL program, contact Nancy Blanco at nancy.blanco@alsde.edu.**

This process will be reevaluated at the end of the year upon evaluation of student data.

Monitoring Exited Students

EL students who attain a 4.8 composite score on the WIDA ACCESS or who meet the Alternate Exit Criteria are exited from the English as a Second Language Services and placed on monitoring status for four academic years. During this monitoring phase, general education classroom teachers and EL teachers must communicate regularly – preferably once every 9 weeks – to ensure students are functioning in the mainstream without EL support.

Ellevation Monitoring

Ellevation is the State-provided platform for monitoring exited students. EL providers may set up monitoring cycles throughout the year that elicit feedback from content teachers regarding the academic performance for exited students. Cycles should be set up a minimum of two times a year in Ellevation, although more frequent monitoring is recommended. The data collected through these forms helps educators identify students who may be in need of additional support. For information on how on how to set up monitoring cycles in Ellevation, use the [link](#) to view a short video tutorial.

If a student is not progressing academically as expected and monitoring suggests a persistent language need, the EL committee must reconvene and determine if the student needs to be retested with the appropriate version of the WIDA Screener Online test. Parent permission must also be obtained before rescreening occurs. If the parent/guardian refuses rescreening the student, this refusal should be documented, and a statement of the parent/guardian's refusal should be included in the I-ELP. If this is the case, the LEA will continue to provide the necessary English language supports for the remainder of the four-year monitoring period.

If the student scores below 5.0 on the appropriate version of the WIDA Screener, the team may reconsider returning the student to EL 2 status and begin providing English language supports. The student will then take WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS at such time the test is administered.

English learners who take WIDA Alternate ACCESS are subject to different exit criteria than those who take the general WIDA ACCESS assessment. ***Once these students meet the state-defined alternate exit criteria and are reclassified as Former ELs, they must be monitored for four years, just like other exited ELs.***

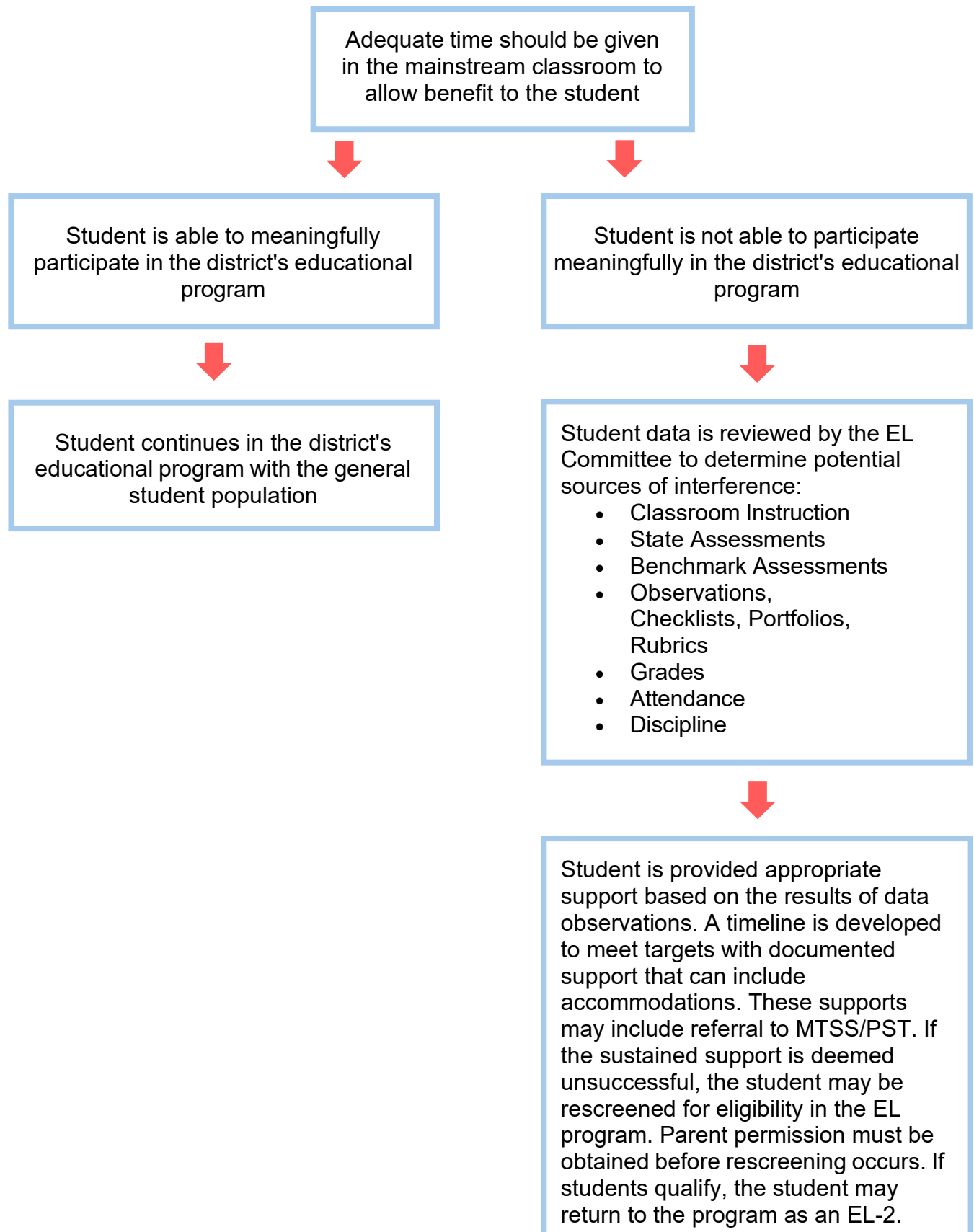
Upon successful completion of four years of monitoring, ELs are classified as FEL.

FEL Codes and Definitions

EL Status Codes	Definitions of Codes
FEL-1 1st Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their first year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-2 2nd Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their second year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-3 3rd Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their third year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL-4 4th Year Monitoring	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their fourth year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take WIDA ACCESS.
FEL Completed 4 Years Monitoring	Former English learner students who have successfully completed four years of monitoring and are no longer English learners.

FELs may receive any of the allowable EL accommodations on the State assessments as long as they are used regularly in the classroom and are written into an I-ELP for the student. Refer to [Part IV of this document](#) for additional information on State testing accommodations.

Monitoring Exited Students Flowchart



Comprehensive English Learner Plan

Components of the Comprehensive English Learner Plan

All LEAs in Alabama must develop, implement, and frequently update a Comprehensive EL Plan, in accordance with Section 3116 of Title III of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, for serving students who are English learners and immigrant students, regardless of whether any students are determined to need support.

The Comprehensive EL Plan should address each aspect of the LEA's program for all ELs, at all grade levels, and in all schools in the school system. The Comprehensive EL Plan should contain sufficient detail and specificity so that each staff person can understand how the plan is to be implemented and should contain the procedural guidance and forms used to carry out responsibilities under the plan. **The LEA is required to have a Comprehensive EL Plan whether the LEA currently has ELs enrolled and regardless of Title III eligibility** (EL Plan can be found in the [eGAP2.0](#)). At a minimum, the local plan must include five (5) parts: Required Theory and Goals, Identification and Placement Procedures, Programs and Instruction, Assessment and Accountability, and Parent, Family, and Community Engagement.

1. Required Theory and Goals

Describe The LEA's educational theory and goals for its program of services – to improve the education of English learners by assisting the children in learning English and meeting the challenging state academic standards. (Sec. 3102)

2. Identification and Placement Procedures

- Include the LEA's procedures for identifying members for the EL Advisory Committee
- Include the LEA's methods for identifying, placing, and assessing the students to be included in the English language instruction educational program.
- The following components must be explained in the plan:
 - Home Language Survey
 - WIDA Online Screener
 - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten
 - WIDA ACCESS
- Include the method and procedures for exiting students from the English Language Instruction Educational program (LIEP) and for monitoring their progress for a period of at least four years (*new in ESSA*), and at a minimum, follow SDE exiting requirements for ELs. All school personnel should be aware of the State established exit criteria of a composite score of 4.8 on the WIDA ACCESS English language proficiency test.

3. Programs and Instruction

- Describe the programs and activities that will be developed, implemented, and administered to ensure that ELs acquire academic language as part of the core LIEP.
- Process the system uses to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment
- Rationale for selecting the particular EL program/s and how they are evidence-based
- Describe how language instruction educational programs will **ensure** that ELs develop English proficiency:
 - How data is used to improve the rate of language acquisition for ELs

- How the LEA supports each school with respect to continuous improvement practices and specific professional development
 - How WIDA English Language Development (WIDA ELD) standards are integrated into the curriculum
- Describe the **grading and retention** policy and procedures. NOTE: ELs cannot fail or be retained if language is the barrier
- Include details on the specific staffing and other resources to be provided to English learners under the LIEP in the district. ESL staff should be qualified with academic preparation in English as a Second Language, e.g. as documented in the 1991 Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Memorandum.
 - Qualified personnel (state certification and/or ESL licensure)
 - ESL staff development
 - Content teacher and administrator staff development
 - Annual Training for all other LEA employees (based on the needs of the LEA)
- Describe how the LEA will collect and submit data in accordance with SDE requirements.
 - How schools are trained to use the state system/database to code ELs and enter reliable and accurate data
- Include the LEA's method for evaluating the effectiveness of its program for English learners and
 - LEA engagement in the continuous improvement cycle
 - In relation to English proficiency and challenging state academic standards
- Include LEA's method of identification and referral of ELs for special services (including Gifted Ed). Note that the Individual English Language Plan must describe how the school will communicate with the child and parent in their native language.

4. Assessment and Accountability

- Describe how the LEA will encourage and hold schools accountable for **annually measuring the English proficiency** of ELs and for participating in the state-administered testing program.
 - Including coordination with the LEA Test Coordinator/Director
 - Including communication of assessment and accountability requirements to schools
- Describe how the LEA will **hold schools accountable** for meeting proficiency and long-term goals
 - Monitoring and evaluating school engagement with continuous improvement plan

5. Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

- Describe how the LEA will inform EL parents using information and notification in the following format:

According to current federal requirements, LEAs must, not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, provide notification to parents related to...

- i. The reasons for the identification
- ii. The child's level of English proficiency.
- iii. How such level was assessed.
- iv. The status of the child's academic achievement
- v. The method of instruction used in the program.

- vi. How the program will meet the educational strengths and needs of the child.
- vii. How the program will specifically help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation.
- viii. The specific exit requirements for such program, expected rate of transition from such program into the regular classroom, and the expected rate of graduation from secondary school.
- ix. In the case of a child with a disability, how the program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child.
- x. Information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance detailing:
 - a. The right of the parents to have their child immediately removed from Title III programs upon request. (IF APPLICABLE)
 - b. The options that parents have to decline to enroll their child in such Title III programs or to choose another program or method of instruction if available. (IF APPLICABLE)
 - c. The various programs and methods of instruction if more than one program or method is offered by the eligible entity

Local Education Agency EL Advisory Committee

Each LEA shall establish an EL Advisory Committee for the purpose of program needs, assessment, evaluation, and for developing the Comprehensive EL Plan. This committee must include central office administrators, assessment specialists, school administrators, school counselors, and ESL staff. The committee should also include parents and community representatives who work with these students and their families in other settings. By working with a group that includes these stakeholders, the LEA can receive valuable input from those whose support and efforts may be important to the success of the English language instruction educational program.

The LEA EL Advisory Committee shall make recommendations to the LEA regarding its ESL program. Some examples of committee responsibilities would be to make recommendations regarding:

- Developing elements of the Language Instruction Educational Program.
- Providing high-quality professional development for staff.
- Facilitating successful parental involvement programs to further student success.
- Budgeting of state, local, and federal funds.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Language Instruction Educational Program.

Title III Consortia

In order to receive a Title III Grant as a single district, LEAs must have sufficient numbers of ELs to generate a minimum grant of \$10,000. If an LEA is ineligible to receive Title III funds, they may form a consortium with other LEAs. If an LEA receives less than the required \$10,000 minimum allocation, it may join or form a consortium with other LEAs to meet the threshold and participate in Title III funding.

Each consortium must select an LEA to be the lead or fiscal agent; this responsibility is often rotated among the members. The fiscal agent is responsible for initiating meetings among consortium members and applying for Title III funds through the SDE's Electronic Grant Application Process (eGAP 2.0).

Non-Public School Participation and Title III - Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016

ESSA 8501(a) PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION – (1) IN GENERAL

Except as otherwise provided in this Act, to the extent consistent with the number of eligible children in areas served by a State educational agency, local educational agency, educational service agency, consortium of those agencies, or another entity receiving financial assistance under a program specified in subsection (b), who are enrolled in private elementary schools and secondary schools in areas served by such agency, consortium, or entity, the agency, consortium, or entity shall, after timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate private school officials provide to those children and their teachers or other educational personnel, on an equitable basis, special educational services or other benefits that address their needs under the program.

ESSA 8501 APPLICABILITY- (1) IN GENERAL- This section applies to programs under —

- A. Title I-C;
- B. Title II-A;
- C. Title III-A;
- D. Title IV-A;
- E. Title IV-B;

ESSA Section 1117(b)(1) CONSULTATION-(1) IN GENERAL- To ensure timely and meaningful consultation, a State educational agency, local educational agency, educational service agency, consortium of those agencies, or entity shall consult with appropriate private school officials during the design and development of the programs under this Act, on issues such as —

- A. how the children's needs will be identified;
- B. what services will be offered;
- C. how, where, and by whom the services will be provided;
- D. how the services will be assessed and how the results of the assessment will be used to improve those services;
- E. the size and scope of the equitable services to be provided to the eligible private school children, and the proportion of funds that is allocated for such services, and how the proportion of funds is determined.
- F. how and when the agency, consortium, or entity will make decisions about the delivery of services, including a thorough consideration and analysis of the views of the private school officials on the provision of contract services through potential third-party providers.
- G. how and when the agency will make decisions about the delivery of services to such children, including a thorough consideration and analysis of the views of the private school officials on the provision of services through a contract with potential third-party providers;
- H. how, if the agency disagrees with the views of the private school officials on the provision of services through a contract, the local educational agency will provide in writing to such

private school officials an analysis of the reasons why the local educational agency has chosen not to use a contractor;

- I. whether the agency shall provide services directly or through a separate government agency, consortium, entity, or third-party contractor;
- J. whether to provide equitable services to eligible private school children—
 - by creating a pool or pools of funds with all the funds allocated under subsection (a)(4)(A) based on all the children from low-income families in a participating school attendance area who attend private schools; or
 - in the agency's participating school attendance area who attend private schools with the proportion of funds allocated under subsection (a)(4)(A) based on the number of children from low-income families who attend private schools;
- K. when, including the approximate time of day, services will be provided; and
- L. whether to consolidate and use funds provided under subsection (a)(4) in coordination with eligible funds available for services to private school children under applicable programs, as defined in section 8501(b)(1) to provide services to eligible private school children participating in programs.

What Are the Requirements?

LEAs and non-public schools must engage in **timely and meaningful** consultation regarding services available to ELs in non-public schools that are located within the geographic boundaries of the LEA. The responsibility for initiating contact with appropriate non-public school officials lies with the LEA.

“Timely and meaningful consultation” must include, but is not limited to, issues such as:

- How ELs will be identified.
- How the needs of ELs will be identified.
- How, when, where, and what services will be provided.
- How the services will be assessed.
- The amount of funds/services available.
 - Title III services provided must be equitable and timely and address the educational needs of the identified students.
 - Services provided to ELs and educational personnel in the non-public schools do not have to be the same as those services provided to public school students. The services must be equitable, comparable, and suitable to the needs of the identified students and teachers.
 - Funds/services provided for private school children and educational personnel must be equal, considering the number and educational needs of those children, to the funds provided for participating public school children.
 - The LEA is responsible for any administrative costs (including assessments) associated with the implementation of the services for Title III students in non-public school students.
 - Non-public schools must have a means of determining and documenting that a language other than English is spoken at home (comparable to the public school Home Language Survey).
 - Non-public schools must provide the LEA “notice” that the non-public school believes they have EL students that should be screened to determine need and eligibility for services.
 - The LEA is responsible for screening students to determine “eligibility.” LEAs can use the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online. The final

- responsibility for determining whether a non-public school student is an EL and eligible for services under Title III lies with the LEA.
- The LEA and non-public school's meaningful consultation must determine a recognized assessment that will be used to measure progress. This may be WIDA ACCESS or an assessment comparable to WIDA ACCESS.
 - Note: If WIDA ACCESS is used for assessment, students must be coded separately to indicate non-public status.
- LEAs and non-public school officials, through meaningful consultation, must determine what programs will be implemented to provide quality and effective instruction to the identified students. Programs must be designed to impact student progress and achievement.
- The LEA must annually evaluate the program effectiveness of the services provided to non-public schools.

Reminders:

- Title III services provided must be secular, neutral, and non-ideological.
- The control of funds used to provide services and the title to materials and equipment purchased with those funds must be retained by the LEA.
- Services for private school children and educational personnel must be provided by employees of the LEA or through a contract made by the LEA with a third party.
- During timely and meaningful consultation, LEAs must inform the non-public school officials of the complaint process.
 - If non-public school officials believe that timely and meaningful consultation has not occurred, they should first discuss the matter with the LEA. The LEA letter inviting the non-public school officials should contain contact information for filing a complaint. For example, giving the address for the ALSDE Ombudsman, P.O. Box 302101, Montgomery, AL, 36130; or 334- 242-8199 to allow the entity to contact the SDE if they remain dissatisfied. See reference in *ESSA (Sec. 1117(b)(6)(A))*

Additional Resources Regarding ESSA and Non-Public School Participation with Title III:

- Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) – Private School Participation in Title III Programs [Website](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance: Fiscal Changes and Equitable Services Requirements Under The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), As Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) [Website](#)

Equal Access to Appropriate Categorical and Other Programs

Title I, Part A, Basic Programs

School systems are required by federal law to provide appropriate language acquisition services for students who are limited-English proficient. The language acquisition services are considered an integral part of a free and appropriate public education for all students. Title I, Part A, funds are to be used to coordinate and **supplement** State and locally funded services, as well as provide other direct services to EL students who are failing or are at risk of failing to meet the State's academic standards. Title I, Part A, funds may be used to pay the salaries of instructional staff to work with students who are experiencing academic difficulties, including limited-English proficient students. Title I staff should coordinate services with ESL and regular classroom teachers to provide the most appropriate instructional approach.

English learners are eligible for programs and services provided by Title I, Part A, on the same basis that non-ELs are eligible. In schools operating Title I schoolwide programs, all children, including ELs, are intended to benefit from the program, and the needs of all students are to be considered in the program design. In Title I - Targeted Assistance programs, ELs are eligible and must be selected for services on the same basis as other children. The LEA is not required to demonstrate that the needs of ELs stem from educational deprivation or solely from their limited-English proficiency.

Title I, Part C, Migrant Education Program

A student may be eligible for services under Title I, Part C, the Migrant Education Program (MEP), if he/she has traveled with a parent or guardian across school system boundaries to obtain temporary or seasonal work in agriculture, fishing, or chicken processing. Migrant funds may be used to support and supplement ESL services, as well as provide direct services to migrant students who are also ELs. Migrant education services do not replace the need or requirement for an English language instruction educational program, and Title I, Part C, may not be the only source of funds used to provide the English language instruction educational programs and/or services.

The MEP is supplemental to the basic, regular education program and addresses needs that may be attributed to the migratory status of the student's family. Remember, not all migrant students are language-minority nor are all language-minority students migrant.

Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Subtitle VII–B of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Act of 2001*, promotes access to public schools for homeless children and youth. Local education agencies must ensure that barriers to enrollment for homeless students are eliminated. Barriers may include requirements for residency, guardianship, school records, immunization records, and transportation, among others.

A student who is limited-English proficient and meets the federal definition of “homeless” is eligible to receive services provided through Subtitle VII–B of the *McKinney Vento Homeless Education Act of 2001* as are other children who meet that definition.

Other Programs, Services, and Facilities

EL students must have access to instructional programs and related services for special populations in a school system. Such programs include, but are not limited to, pre-school programs, career/technical programs, special education programs, gifted and talented programs, and extracurricular activities. All student support programs and services and extracurricular activities must be available to language-minority students or ELs on the same basis that they are available to other students in a school or school system. Similarly, each LEA must ensure that ELs have access to comparable instructional materials, facilities, and other resources as other students.

Circumstances and situations regarding participation of ELs in programs and services, whether in school or in an extracurricular setting, that are not clearly addressed in this document may be referred to the applicable program office within the SDE.

English Learners with Disabilities and Special Education Services

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to follow procedures for the education of ELs with disabilities. Among the requirements are identification, evaluation, eligibility determination, and service provision for ELs suspected of having a disability. Special education programs and services must be provided in accordance with the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (P.L. 108-446).

The Comprehensive EL Plan must describe how the LEA will secure the services of someone to administer assessments, tests, or other evaluations and how the person will communicate with the child/parent in the native language. The education of ELs with disabilities must be addressed in the LEA's Comprehensive EL Plan and in the Special Education LEA Plan.

Uncertainty often exists regarding the referral of ELs for Special Education Services (SES). ELs are eligible to receive Special Education Services on the same basis as all other students. Care should be used to ensure that limited-English proficiency is not the basis of a referral.

Note: ELs with disabilities should be provided English language acquisition services as determined appropriate by the ESL specialist and the IEP Team and this information should be included as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) on the Profile Page. Eligible EL students receive both special education and English language acquisition services.

All students with disabilities are guaranteed the right to:

- A Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- An IEP outlining special education and related services (if needed) to provide access to the general curriculum and to meet their unique needs.
- Access to dispute resolution processes.
- An educational experience provided in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).
- Have tests administered in a way that is not culturally discriminatory.

The EL student who is determined eligible for special education services has a right to the same individualized special education services as other students with disabilities. Public Law 108-446 requires that State and local education agencies ensure that the students are assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability prior to determining eligibility. The materials and procedures used to assess a limited-English proficient student must be selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which the student has a disability and needs special education, rather than measuring the student's English language skills. The *Alabama Administrative Code* (AAC) (290-8-9.04(1)(e)) states that for an EL student to be deemed eligible, the Eligibility Committee (or IEP Team) must determine that the communication disorder exists in the child's native language and is not the result of learning English as a second language. The English proficiency level of ELs should be considered by the IEP Team prior to assessment to determine eligibility for special education services, with the assistance of the ESL specialist. If the English proficiency level is determined to be comparable to peers, then assessments may be administered in English. If the proficiency level is not comparable to peers, then the assessments must be administered in the EL's native language. If the IEP Team determines that information from administration of the assessments in both languages is appropriate, then this procedure should be completed. Any nonstandard administration of assessments should be documented on the *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services* form.

A child may not be determined to be eligible for special education if **the** determinant factor is the child's lack of instruction in reading, math, or limited-English proficiency. The IEP for an EL with a disability must include all the components listed in the *Alabama Administrative Code* (see Appendix A, Online Resources, Item 2). The IEP Team shall consider the language needs of the student as those needs relate to the student's IEP. Parent participation is a required part of the special education process and to ensure active participation, accommodations must be made at all meetings and in written communications for the non-English speaking parent. This may also be necessary for parents of students who are National Origin of Minority whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English (NOMPHLOTE). These accommodations must include an interpreter for oral communication, and written communication must be provided in the parent's native language.

You can find additional information on ELs and the special education process on the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). [Website](#)

Gifted and Talented Education

The Alabama SDE and the U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) signed a Title VI Resolution Agreement focusing on underrepresented populations in gifted programs in Alabama. In the agreement, the SDE committed to a variety of actions related to screening/referral criteria and procedures, evaluation processes and eligibility criteria, program oversight, and technical assistance.

TRANSACT[®] (Changing to Pathwise) Compliance and Communication Center[™]

The Alabama SDE sponsors statewide, unlimited district access to TransACT (changing to Pathwise). This resource is being provided by the State for LEAs at no cost to the LEA. [Website](#)

TransACT (changing to Pathwise) is an on-line service that enables educators to comply with the parental communication requirements mandated by the ESSA as well as federal and state requirements to effectively communicate legal and policy matters to parents in languages they can understand.

School systems and schools will have access to the following services from TransACT[®] (changing to Pathwise):

- **ESEA (ESSA) Parent Notifications** – A collection of more than 44 documents fully supporting the parent communication mandates (Title I, III, IV, X and FERPA) of ESSA available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Hmong, Russian, and Vietnamese.
- **GenEd Translation e-Library** - A collection of 60-plus general education letters and forms covering Health and Medical, School Administration, National School Lunch Program, and Special Services. These resources are available in 20-plus priority languages and include all relevant Office for Civil Rights (OCR) guidance information.

Part III: Language Instruction Educational Programs

Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Administration

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The SDE does not prescribe the type of LIEP model for LEAs to implement. Decisions concerning the instructional program model must be made by each LEA. Not all program models are suitable for an LEA's particular situation; therefore, the SDE encourages LEAs to select a program after conducting a comprehensive needs assessment. When conducting a needs assessment, LEAs should collect and analyze data from various sources that will help inform program selection. A comprehensive needs assessment allows LEAs to set data-driven goals and strategies for meeting those goals.

Castañeda v. Pickard

The court case *Castañeda v. Pickard* established a three-pronged test for evaluating programs that serve ELs. The SDE has developed a model to provide LEAs with technical assistance to comply with this law (see Figure 1 below).

Three Principles for Serving EL Students Based on Castañeda v. Pickard



This case established a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of a district's program for the English language learner:

- Is the program based on an educational theory recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is it considered by experts as a legitimate experimental strategy?
- Are the programs and practices, including resources and personnel, reasonably calculated to implement this theory effectively?
- Does the school district evaluate its programs and make adjustments where needed to ensure that language barriers are actually being overcome?

Program Selection

Once a needs assessment has been conducted, LEAs are well-positioned to select an appropriate program model. The program that an LEA selects should be of sound educational theory recognized by experts in the field.

The LIEP must ensure that students gain the English language skills necessary to function successfully in an English-speaking academic setting. If academic deficiencies exist, the LEA must provide additional support as needed to ensure that ELs meet the same challenging State academic standards that all students are expected to meet.

Depending on the needs of ELs and current available resources, these programs may be implemented in various ways to best meet the needs of students and the LEA. **Whatever program model is selected, instruction in English language instructional programs must be provided by qualified and appropriately trained teachers.** Students must receive core ESL instruction from certified teachers, versus paraprofessionals.

Approved LIEP Models

English as a Second Language programs (versus bilingual programs) are likely to be used in school systems where the EL population is diverse and represents many different languages or where teachers are not certified in bilingual education. ESL programs can accommodate students from different language backgrounds in the same class, and teachers do not need to be proficient in the home language(s) of their students.

Examples of Language Assistance Programs Considered Educationally Sound in Theory According to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and Department of Justice (DOJ):

Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support - ESL-certified teacher provides language instruction that uses content as a medium for building language skills. Although using content as a means, instruction is still focused primarily on learning English.

Dual language or Two-way Immersion - Bilingual program where the goal is for students to develop language proficiency in two languages by receiving instruction in English and another language in a classroom that is usually comprised of half primary-English speakers and half primary speakers of the other language.

English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) - Program of techniques, methodology, and special curriculum designed to teach ELs explicitly about the English language, including the academic vocabulary needed to access content instruction, and to develop their English language proficiency in all four language domains (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing)

Newcomer Programs - ELs who are recent immigrants and typically have low literacy and are new to formal education settings receive specialized schooling designed to acclimate them to the American school setting and prepare them to participate in mainstream classes.

Transitional Bilingual Education or Early-Exit Bilingual Education - Program that maintains and develops skills in the primary language while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English. The primary purpose of a TBE program is to facilitate the EL's transition to an all-English instructional program, while the students receive academic subject instruction in the primary language to the extent necessary.

Examples of Techniques, Methodology, and Special Curriculum:

SDAIE: An instructional approach that allows EL students full access to content in the classroom while supporting levels of English proficiency. ELs comprehend key concepts in content areas without needing full comprehension of the English language. This is achieved using highly effective teaching strategies using comprehensible input. This especially supports intermediate levels of proficiency within a positive, affective environment.

Sheltered Instruction: An instructional approach used to make academic instruction in English understandable to EL students. In the sheltered classroom, teachers use physical activities, visual aids, and the environment to teach vocabulary for concept development in mathematics, science, social studies, and other subjects.

Structured Immersion: Use only English, but there is no explicit ESL instruction. As in sheltered English and content-based programs, English is taught through the content areas. Structured immersion teachers have strong receptive skills in their students' first language.

ESL push-in is in contrast with ESL pull-out instruction. The ESL teacher goes into the regular classrooms to work with ELs. Communication and collaboration between ESL teachers and content-area teachers are essential for this model to be successful.

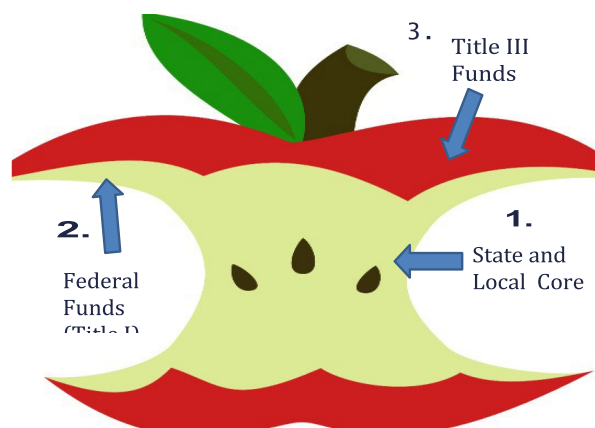
ESL pull-out is generally used in elementary school settings. Students spend part of the school day in a mainstream classroom but are pulled out for a portion of the day to receive instruction in English as a second language. Although schools with a large number of ESL students may have a full-time ESL teacher, some systems employ an ESL teacher who travels to several schools to work with small groups of students scattered throughout the district.

ESL class period is generally used in secondary school settings. Students receive ESL instruction during a regular class period and usually receive course credit. They may be grouped for instruction according to their level of English proficiency.

An ESL resource center is a variation of the pull-out design, bringing students together from several classrooms or schools. The resource center concentrates ESL materials and staff in one location and is usually staffed by at least one full-time ESL teacher.

Note: Districts must provide the Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) with State and/or local funds. The following illustration is used to illustrate the supplement of federal funds. The LIEP (apple core) must be defined by each district. Other federal funds (flesh) will supplement the core LIEP and Title III funds (skin) will supplement after both have been implemented.

Language Instruction Educational Program Implementation



After the LEA conducts a needs assessment and selects an appropriate ESL program, the next step is **program implementation**. LEAs are encouraged to convene a committee to develop an action plan that will indicate how and when goals and strategies will be met, the personnel responsible for each action step, and the funding required to implement the program.

Language Instruction Educational Program Curriculum and Instruction

WIDA Consortium

WIDA is a consortium of many states dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English language learners. The WIDA Consortium developed English language proficiency standards and an English language proficiency test aligned with those standards (WIDA ACCESS). More information about the WIDA Consortium may be found on the [WIDA website](#).

By joining the WIDA Consortium, Alabama adopted the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELD) Standards that are designed to assess the progress of children in attaining English proficiency, including a child's level of comprehension in the four recognized domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards are based on the academic language content of PreK-12 students. [WIDA Alabama website](#).

Course of Study (COS) and WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards

ELs are a diverse group of students with personal, cultural, and educational backgrounds that often differ significantly, and thus require instruction that meets their needs. Like all students in Alabama, ELs must be provided with access to the Alabama COS and require different instructional pathways to master those standards.

ELs require instruction that makes content comprehensible, accelerating acquisition of academic language proficiency and literacy. Appropriate instructional support increasing academic English and achievement may include an adequate number of pre-activities and modeling, access to reading material in their native language for classroom and homework assignments, availability of bilingual books (both fiction and non-fiction), meaningful hands-on activities that contextualize abstract concepts, and use of their native language in writing and speaking activities (even if the teacher does not know this language). "Any modification of instruction that depends on supports to bolster the students' access to meaning" (Gottlieb, 2006) is considered a classroom accommodation. As the ELs attain fluency in English, fewer variations or accommodations in classroom activities will be necessary.

English learners must simultaneously learn English and content. The WIDA ELD Standards facilitate the design of language development objectives that support, guide, and develop content knowledge and skills at the appropriate level of English proficiency. Educators must go beyond teaching ELs “survival English” by developing their academic English within the context of all content areas.

Students who are acquiring a new language undergo six stages of language development: Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging, and Reaching until they attain English proficiency. (See Table 2 for the WIDA Consortium’s description of the Performance Definitions.)



By implementing the WIDA ELD standards in the classroom, teachers can provide ELs with meaningful access to local curriculum as they progress through the stages of language acquisition.

For more information, see the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework](#).

WIDA provides Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs) to explain how ELs use language as they progress through the six levels of English proficiency. They describe what students can do with language in connection to specific academic goals, known as Language Expectations. PLDs help educators understand and support students’ language development across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and are used to guide instruction that is both developmentally appropriate and academically meaningful. For more information, see [WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors: Informing Expectations and Scaffolding](#).

Grading and Retention Guidelines for English Learners

Grading

Grading of ELs should be based on students’ level of English proficiency. The teacher ensures the continual use of high-quality instruction and assessment as well as instructional and assessment accommodations in accordance with the student’s I-ELP. This complies with the federal law, *Every Student Succeeds Act of* (ESSA). Appropriate instruction and differentiation must be adjusted according to language proficiency level to appropriately accommodate the student. Documentation of these components (lesson plans, work samples, and ongoing assessments) should be maintained by the classroom teacher.

Retention

Retention of ELs shall not be based solely upon level of English language proficiency (Section I, Part G, Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of *Lau v. Nichols*). Prior to considering retention of an EL, the following points should be addressed in consultation with the EL Committee.

- What is the student’s level of English language proficiency?
- Has an Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP) been implemented to document classroom accommodations and student progress?
- To ensure meaningful participation, are classroom accommodations being made in the areas of:

- Teacher lesson delivery at student's level of English proficiency?
- Activities and assignments?
- Homework?
- Formal and informal assessments (e.g., quizzes and tests)?
- How much individual English language development instruction is the student receiving during the school day?
- Has an alternate grading strategy been implemented (e.g., a portfolio, checklist, teacher observation, or rubric assessment on content and language objectives)?
- Has the student's classroom teacher been adequately trained with EL instructional and assessment strategies specifically designed for students learning English?
- Do the report cards indicate that students were graded according to their I-ELPs?

Language Instruction Educational Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation

Federal law does not prescribe a particular program model or evaluation approach; the approach to, and design of, an effective EL program evaluation will vary from district to district. The evaluation components set forth are provided for districts to consider in developing their own approach. Source: 1991 OCR policy memorandum

Language Instruction Educational Program Evaluation (LIEP)

Every year of program implementation, the LEA must conduct a **program evaluation** to determine the effectiveness of the program. Evaluating the EL program involves collection and analysis of data to determine whether the goals set forth during the comprehensive needs assessment (or previous program evaluation) were met. The data analysis should be summarized to illustrate the status of the EL program and should include the LEA's future goals and plans to improve the program the following school year.

According to Chapter 9 of the U.S. Department of Education English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs), updated November 2016, LEA's should consider the following when evaluating the effectiveness of the EL Program:

- Successful EL programs enable EL students to attain both English proficiency and parity of participation in the standard instructional program within a reasonable period of time.
- LEAs should collect longitudinal data to monitor and compare the performance of current ELs, former ELs, and never-ELs in the LEA's standard instructional program. Data should not be limited to WIDA ACCESS.
- When EL programs do not produce both English proficiency and parity of participation within a reasonable period of time, SEAs and LEAs must modify the EL program.

The **US Department of Education's EL Tool Kit** has an excellent sample for evaluating programs and services for English learners.

Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Policy

The Office of Civil Rights enforces federal civil rights laws in schools. According to OCR, Districts are required to modify their programs if they prove to be unsuccessful after a legitimate trial. As a practical matter, recipients cannot comply with this requirement without evaluating their programs every one to two years.

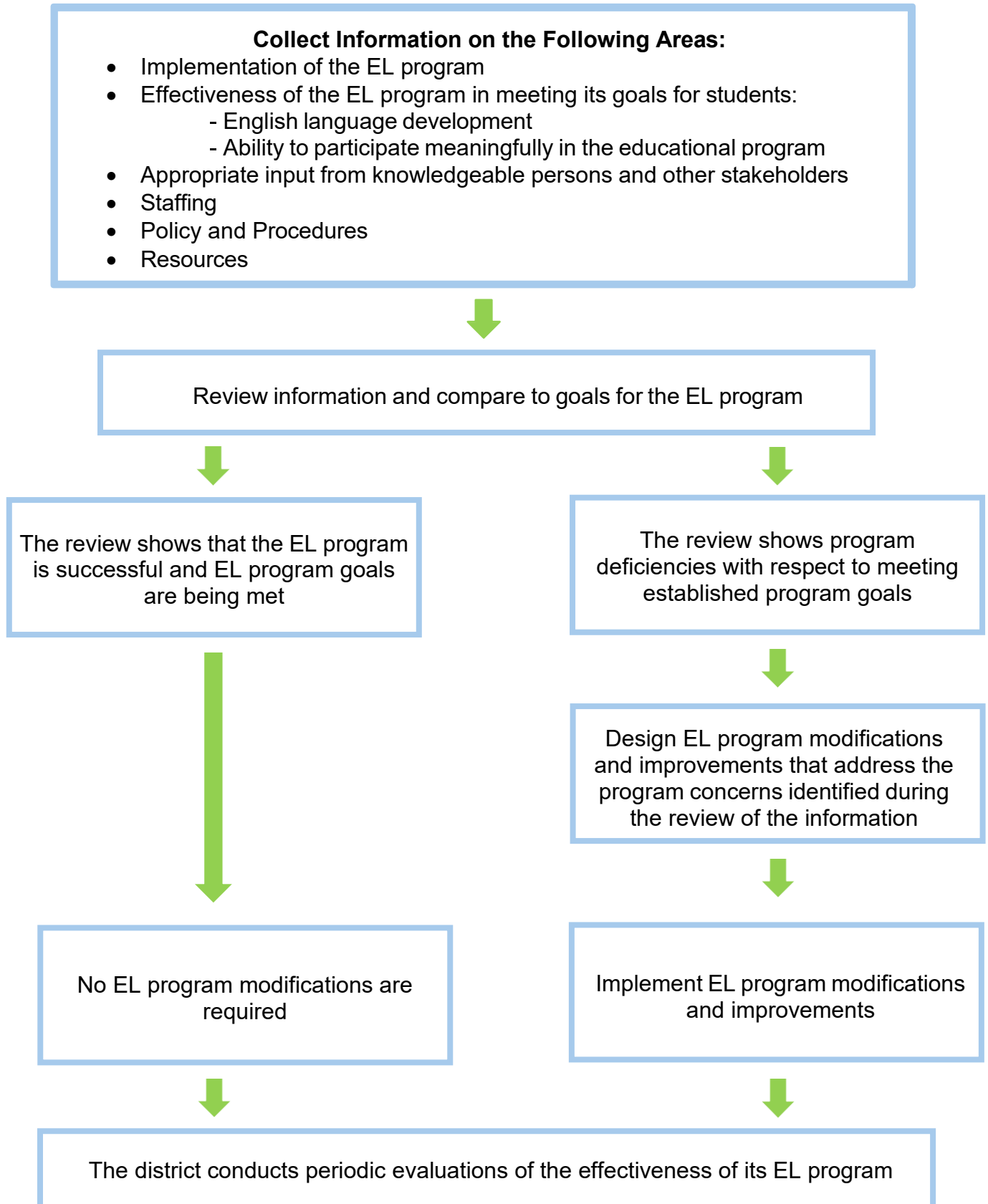
Generally, districts measure "success" in terms of whether the program is achieving the particular goals the district has established for the program and its students. If the district has established no particular goals, the program is successful if its participants are achieving proficiency in English and are able to participate meaningfully in classrooms without EL services.

Class Size

Caseloads for itinerant teachers vary and must be based on student needs. For example, two schools may have the same number of ELs, but may require different levels of language support. Points to consider in the placement and number of itinerant ESL teachers are:

- The number of schools that have ELs who require services.
- The number of ELs enrolled in each school/classroom.
- The students' English proficiency and literacy level in both their native language and English.
- The amount of planning and collaboration time necessary for the ESL and classroom teachers.

Program Evaluation Flowchart



English as a Second Language Teacher Certification

State Requirements

Teaching English to non-native speakers requires knowledge and skills that differ from teaching other subjects, such as science and math. Although certain educational theories and instructional strategies are interdisciplinary, teacher preparation courses may be inadequate in providing methodology and theory that address English language development within core subject areas. For additional information related to certification pathways and requirements for teaching English as a Second Language, please visit the [Teacher Certification](#) resources available on the Alabama Achieves website or email tcert@alsde.edu.

Alabama Universities Offering ESOL Certification or Endorsement Programs

University	Alt Class A (Cert)	Class A (Cert)	Class AA (Ed.S.)	PhD	Minor	Certificate	Grad (non-cert)	UG (non-cert)
Athens State University					✓	✓	✓	
Auburn University	✓	✓						
Troy University					✓	✓	✓	✓
University of Alabama	✓	✓					✓	
University of Alabama at Birmingham	✓	✓	✓	✓				
University of Alabama in Huntsville	✓	✓				✓		
University of North Alabama	✓	✓				✓		
University of South Alabama	✓	✓						

Source: Alabama-Mississippi Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (AMTESOL), "ESL Teacher Education & Degree Programs – Alabama." Retrieved June 25, 2025.

Part IV: Student Assessment and Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency

Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program Information

It is the policy and expectation of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) that all students, regardless of sex, race, color, creed, religion, belief, national origin, ethnic group, or disability be provided an opportunity to participate in the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP).

State Board of Education, State Department of Education, Administrative Code 290-4-2-.01: All students must be provided the opportunity to participate in the State testing program. The ACAP consists of the following assessments:

Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program		
Assessment	Grades	Subjects
WIDA ACCESS	K - 12	Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing
WIDA Alternate ACCESS	K - 12	Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing
ACAP Summative	2 - 8	English Language Arts, Math
	4, 6, 8	Science
ACAP Alternate	2-8, 10, 11	English Language Arts, Math
	4, 6, 8, 11	Science
PreACT Secure	10	Reading, English, Math, Science
ACT with Writing	11	Reading, English, Writing, Math, Science
ACT WorkKeys (Optional)	12	Workplace Documents, Applied Math, Graphic Literacy
National Assessment of Educational Progress	4, 8, 12	Selected Schools Only

Student Assessment Manuals

Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program Integrity Handbook for Test Administration

With the rise in the State's EL population, it is important that all educators are adequately informed on the policies and procedures set forth by the ALSDE in order to provide meaningful experiences that will enhance the education of Alabama's ELs. The *Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program Integrity Handbook for Test Administration* (Integrity Handbook), developed by Student Assessment, provides detailed information regarding the roles and responsibilities of Testing Staff, Test Administration Training, Test Security policies and requirements, and State policy. Also included are forms used in test administration and forms needed for training Testing Staff. This document is rich in information and is a valuable resource for educators. Any educator who will participate in the administration of any state assessment, including each of the EL screeners, must be trained on each specific role identified in the Integrity Handbook for which they will participate, including participation in Test Security Training.

Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Policy Manual

The Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Policy (ASAP) Manual is a valuable resource that details how to select and use accessibility supports and/or accommodations on State assessments. This manual is intended to be used by educators who serve students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP)s, Section 504 Plans, or Individual English Language Plans (I-ELP)s. The ASAP Manual houses the ACAP Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Tables for the ACAP Summative and ACAP Alternate assessments, which list every available support on each of the State assessments. The Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Tables are crucial in the development of each of these plans to ensure that only eligible supports are identified for State assessments. The ASAP Manual also contains the Testing Supports Form and the Use of Accessibility Supports and/or Accommodations on State Assessments form which are both used to document supports provided to students on State assessments.

WIDA Secure Portal and WIDA AMS/DRC: Two Separate Websites for Educators

There is often confusion over these two websites. Educators need access to both and will use each of them for very different functions. The information below will help educators determine which website is needed and for what purpose.

What Will I Find on the WIDA Website?

[WIDA Website](#)

Training Courses, Resources, Scoring for WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

The WIDA website contains multiple resources, rich in information, which are useful to educators and families of ELs. The WIDA website is also the location for the **required annual training** for every educator who will administer any of the English language assessments and screeners.

The following information is located on the WIDA website:

WIDA Screener Online Resources

- WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Resources
- WIDA ACCESS Online

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Resources

- Scoring Calculator for WIDA Screener for Kindergarten
- WIDA ACCESS Webinars/Q & A Sessions
- WIDA Standards and CAN-DO Descriptors
- WIDA Professional Learning Resources and E-Learning Modules
- Online Training Modules for all EL assessments and screeners
- WIDA Research

Educator and Family Resources

- Technology Coordinator Resources
- Test Administrator Manuals for ALL EL Assessments
- Account Creator
- Account Management and Training Status

Creating WIDA Accounts

District Test Coordinators (DTC)s and/or EL Coordinators have been granted permissions that allow for the following:

- Create user accounts
- Assign permissions

- View training history and scores

Upon login to **WIDA Secure Portal** , Coordinators are able to select the **Manage**  tab and then “Manage Users” to create accounts, assign permissions, or search current users scoring history.

Viewing Training and Quiz Scores

DTCs and/or EL Coordinators are able to view the training history of educators in order to confirm that training has taken place. Without this confirmation, no one should administer any English language assessment.

Coordinators will follow the steps above and select “Certification Report” to view certifications and dates of completion. Additionally, all users can be exported into an excel file for easier viewing. This is helpful for making sure educators have completed and passed the quizzes annually. Login credentials are required in order to access portions of the website. For access to this website, contact the DTC or Student Assessment for details.

Contact Information: help@wida.us – Help Desk - 866-276-7735

What Will I Find on the WIDA AMS/Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) Website?

WIDA AMS

Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) Website

Test Management Portal

DRC **manages** the State’s English language assessments through the DRC WIDA-AMS website. This website supports the preparation, management, and administration of the WIDA ACCESS suite of assessments that includes WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Screener Online. Educators gain access and are given permissions by the DTC or, in some cases, the EL Coordinator. The following information is located in the DRC portal:

- Test demos, sample items, and test practice (no login credentials required)
- Test materials ordering/processing
- WIDA Screener Online test guidance/scoring located under the DRC Customer tab: WIDA Knowledge Check Articles
- User set up and permissions
- Student Management: Add students, track students’ test sessions, edit test sessions
- Test management
- Student Transfer Form
- Test results
- Data Validation
- Testing software downloads
- On Demand report delivery of WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS in a variety of languages.

Coordinators must assign the “educator scoring” permission and validate that the Writing and Speaking quizzes were completed and passed. Directions on how to do this are located in the **WIDA Screener Online Test Administration Manual** and/or the **WIDA Screener Kindergarten Test Administration Manual**.

Login credentials are required to access this portal. Contact the DTC or Student Assessment for details. **Email:** wida@datarecognitioncorp.com **Help Desk:** 855-787-9615

Screening Potential English Learners

Qualified WIDA Screener Administrators

1. May be part-time or full-time employees of the district.
2. Must be certificated or hold the qualifications of an Instructional Paraprofessional.
3. Instructional Paraprofessionals can be used for the screening instruments ONLY.
4. Must complete the required WIDA online training courses annually for the screening assessment for which they are responsible and provide proof of certification to either the DTC or EL Coordinator.
5. Must complete Test Security Training provided by Student Assessment on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online Handbook via recorded webinar or through either the DTC or EL Coordinator.

Note: Beginning in the fall of the 2026-2027 school year, **ALL VERSIONS** of the screener must be administered by **CERTIFIED** personnel who have completed the required trainings for administration. LEAs are advised to make adjustments to current practices before the 2026-2027 school year if they are utilizing paraprofessionals to administer screening instruments.

Alabama Screening Assessments

The only assessments used for identification for potential EL students are the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and the WIDA Screener Online. In very rare cases, WIDA Screener Paper is also available with ALSDE permission only. Districts are responsible for the cost of the WIDA Screener Paper.

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is an individually administered paper-and-pencil test used for identifying potential EL students in grades Pre-K4 through the first semester of Grade 1. In this context, Pre-K 4 refers to the spring or summer prior to kindergarten enrollment when children are participating in the registration and screening process for kindergarten entrance for the first time. Students are screened to determine language proficiency in the listening and speaking domains. **for screening students in the second semester of Grade 1 through Grade 12 and is free to all users.** must be used **for screening students in the second semester of Grade 1 through Grade 12 and is free to all users.** The WIDA Screener Online assesses English language proficiency in all four domains of language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Login credentials are required.

Annual online training at wida.wisc.edu is required in order to administer this assessment. In addition, Test Administrators must complete the training provided by Student Assessment, which includes training on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online Handbook. This training by Student Assessment also includes Test Security Training. All forms in the handbook must be signed upon completion of training and returned to the DTC or EL Coordinator, if directed. Contact your DTC for login credentials for the online training.

WIDAScreener Paper

WIDA Screener Paper (ALSDE approval required) is available for those students who are unable to meaningfully access the WIDA Screener Online even with accommodations. **Annual online training is required** in order to be able to administer this assessment. There is a cost for this

assessment, and that cost lies with the Local Education Agency (LEA). Contact Student Assessment at studentassessment@alsde.edu for additional guidance for the use of the paper screener.

WIDA Screeners: Determining the Appropriate Grade-Level Cluster

The appropriate grade-level cluster for WIDA screeners is based on a student’s current grade level and the time of year. For **first-grade students in their first semester**, WIDA recommends using the **Kindergarten test form**.

For students entering a new grade-level cluster, WIDA recommends administering the **lower cluster form** during the **first semester**. For example, a student in the first semester of 6th grade may take the **Grades 4–5 form**. The **Grades 6–8 form** is generally used from the **second semester of 6th grade through the first semester of 9th grade**. See the chart below for guidance on grade-level cluster placement.

Grade	K		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12	
Semester	1/2		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Grade-Level Cluster Form	K Test		Grade 1 Test		Grades 2-3 Test				Grades 4-5 Test				Grades 6-8 Test				Grades 9-12 Test									

For more information on this topic, see the [WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Test Administrator Manual | WIDA Secure Portal](#) and/or the [WIDA Screener Online Test Administration Manual | WIDA Secure Portal](#).

Screening and Testing Foreign Exchange Students

The district will provide a HLS to any foreign exchange student who enrolls in school. If the foreign exchange student has a language other than English identified on the HLS, the foreign exchange student will be administered the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online.

There are no special exceptions for Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who are English learners for the purposes of English Language Proficiency assessments if they attend school in the United States. Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who qualify as English learners must receive ESL services, and, if applicable, Title III supplemental services.

Foreign Exchange students **are included in the State’s immigrant count** for Title III funding purposes:

- If the Foreign Exchange student is also an English learner, s/he would be included in an LEA’s count of EL students for the Title III formula subgrant.
- If the Foreign Exchange student meets the definition of “immigrant” student under section 3201(5) of ESEA, s/he would also be included in an LEA’s count of immigrant children and youth.
- If the Foreign Exchange student qualifies as an English learner, they must participate in the Title I required assessments, including the ELP assessment WIDA ACCESS. Foreign exchange students will also participate on any of the State’s content assessments.

Screening and Testing ELs in Private Schools

Private schools may choose to assess their English learners using WIDA ACCESS, WIDA Alternate ACCESS, the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, or the WIDA Screener Online. All associated costs are the responsibility of the private school; the State will not cover these expenses. If a private school elects to test its students, it must establish a contract directly with DRC. To get more information about testing students in private schools, contact Student Assessment.

For information regarding the screening and/or provision of language services to private schools, contact Federal Programs.

Screening and Testing ELs in Charter Schools

Charter schools, like regular schools, are required to screen and test EL students using the State-approved screening instruments. EL students must also participate on either the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments. Assessment results will be included in all accountability calculations. Charter schools must follow the same timelines for screening, identification, and parent notification set forth in **Part II of this document**. Additionally, Test Administrators must also adhere to all requirements for training purposes and be trained on test administration procedures and test security procedures.

Screening and Testing ELs in Virtual Schools

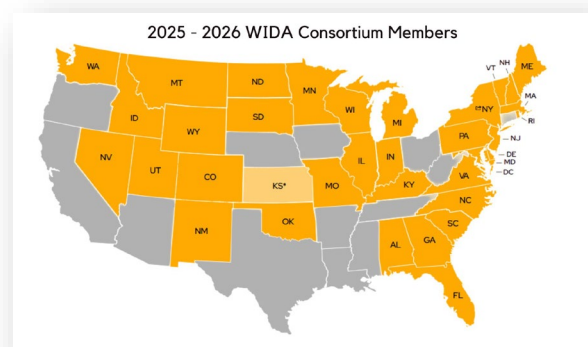
Virtual schools, like regular schools, are required to screen and test EL students using the State-approved screening instruments and the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments. EL students who participate in any of the assessments will be included in all accountability calculations for the district. Virtual schools must follow the same timelines for screening, identification, and parent notification set forth in **Part II of this document**. Additionally, Test Administrators must also adhere to all requirements for training purposes and be trained on test administration procedures and test security procedures.

Screening Potential EL Student Enrolling in a District from a WIDA State

After the school has administered the HLS, the next step is to screen the student, if needed, to determine whether the student meets the criteria for designation as an EL.

Before screening, consider the following:

- It is incumbent upon the receiving district to contact the state from which the student came to determine EL status. If the student was determined to be eligible for services within the past calendar year by meeting Alabama eligibility requirements (see qualifying scores in this section) for either of the screeners, and there are records to substantiate this, the school must accept the records of eligibility and place the student accordingly. In this case, there is no reason to screen the student.
- If there is documentation that indicates the student received a 4.8 composite score on WIDA ACCESS, this will be accepted by Alabama. If this is the case, **DO NOT SCREEN** the student.



- If the school is not able to get this information from the sending state in order to meet the deadline for screening, the school must proceed with screening the student. Student Assessment is available to help in making contact with WIDA states if the school/district is unsuccessful in getting the needed documentation.

Contact Student Assessment for further guidance on screening students from out of state.

Screening Potential ELs Enrolling from Other Districts in Alabama and WIDA States

If a potential EL enrolls from another district within Alabama, the receiving LEA is responsible for contacting the sending school to determine screener status. If the student has already been screened in the previous Alabama district, it is not necessary to rescreen upon enrollment in the new Alabama district.

Screening Students Who Exited in Another WIDA State with Lower Exit Criteria

If a student transfers into Alabama from another WIDA state with documentation showing they were exited from EL services based on that state's approved exit criteria - even if the proficiency level is below Alabama's required 4.8 composite score - the student will be recognized as a Former EL in Alabama. The student will not be reclassified as an EL; however, in accordance with federal guidance, the student must be monitored for four years from the original exit date in the prior state. Given the discrepancy in exit criteria, LEAs are encouraged to monitor the student's academic performance and language development especially closely during this period to ensure the student is able to participate meaningfully and successfully in the general education program.

Screening Potential ELs Enrolling from a Non-WIDA State

If a student enrolls from a non-WIDA state, the student should be screened to determine their status as an English learner ***unless*** documentation is obtained from the previous school indicating that the student met exit criteria in that state. In these instances, the student will not be reclassified as an EL; however, in accordance with federal guidance, the student must be monitored for four years from the original exit date in the prior state. LEAs are encouraged to monitor the student's academic performance and language development closely during this period to ensure the student is able to participate meaningfully and successfully in the general education program.

Qualifying Scores for Potential ELs

The WIDA Screener Online yields an overall composite score based on the language domains tested. The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and the WIDA Screener Online may be used. The following guidelines determine eligibility for placement in the English language instruction educational program:

Qualifying Scores

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten			
Grade	Required Domains	Qualifies Student as EL	Does Not Qualify Student as EL
Pre-K4 Pre-registration period for kindergarten entry through 1 st semester of Grade 1	Listening, Speaking	Less than 4.5 Oral Language Score	4.5 or higher Oral Language Score
WIDA Screener Online			
Grade	Required Domains	Qualifies Student as EL	Does Not Qualify Student as EL
2 nd semester of Grade 1 through Grade 12	Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking	Less than 5.0	5.0 or higher

Note: In cases where students score too high and do not qualify for services (NOMPHLOTE) but are experiencing difficulty with language in the classroom, it may be necessary to reassess the student. It is permissible to readminister the initial screener to the student, with the parent/guardian(s) permission, in order to determine if the student does qualify to receive services.

If a student scores a 4.0 or below on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, they will be exempt from AlaKids and marked as “Not Observed.” See [AlaKIDS – Early Childhood Education \(alabamagov\)](http://alabamagov.org/AlaKids)

Screening Potential ELs with Disabilities

Accommodations are allowed for potential EL students with disabilities on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online. Potential EL students who have a current IEP or Section 504 Plan may be eligible for those accommodations. If accommodations in the IEP or Section 504 Plan are the same as the accommodations listed in the *WIDA Screener Online Accommodation Selection Checklist for Students with an IEP/Section 504 Plan* or the *WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Checklist for Students with an IEP/Section 504 Plan*, those accommodations may be provided when administering either of these screeners. **More information on this topic is located in the *Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Policy (ASAP)* manual.**

Alabama State Department of Education Alternate Screener Checklist

For the 2025-2026 school year, Alabama will not use the WIDA Alternate Screener. Instead, LEAs will **continue use of the [Alternate Screener Checklist](#)** for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

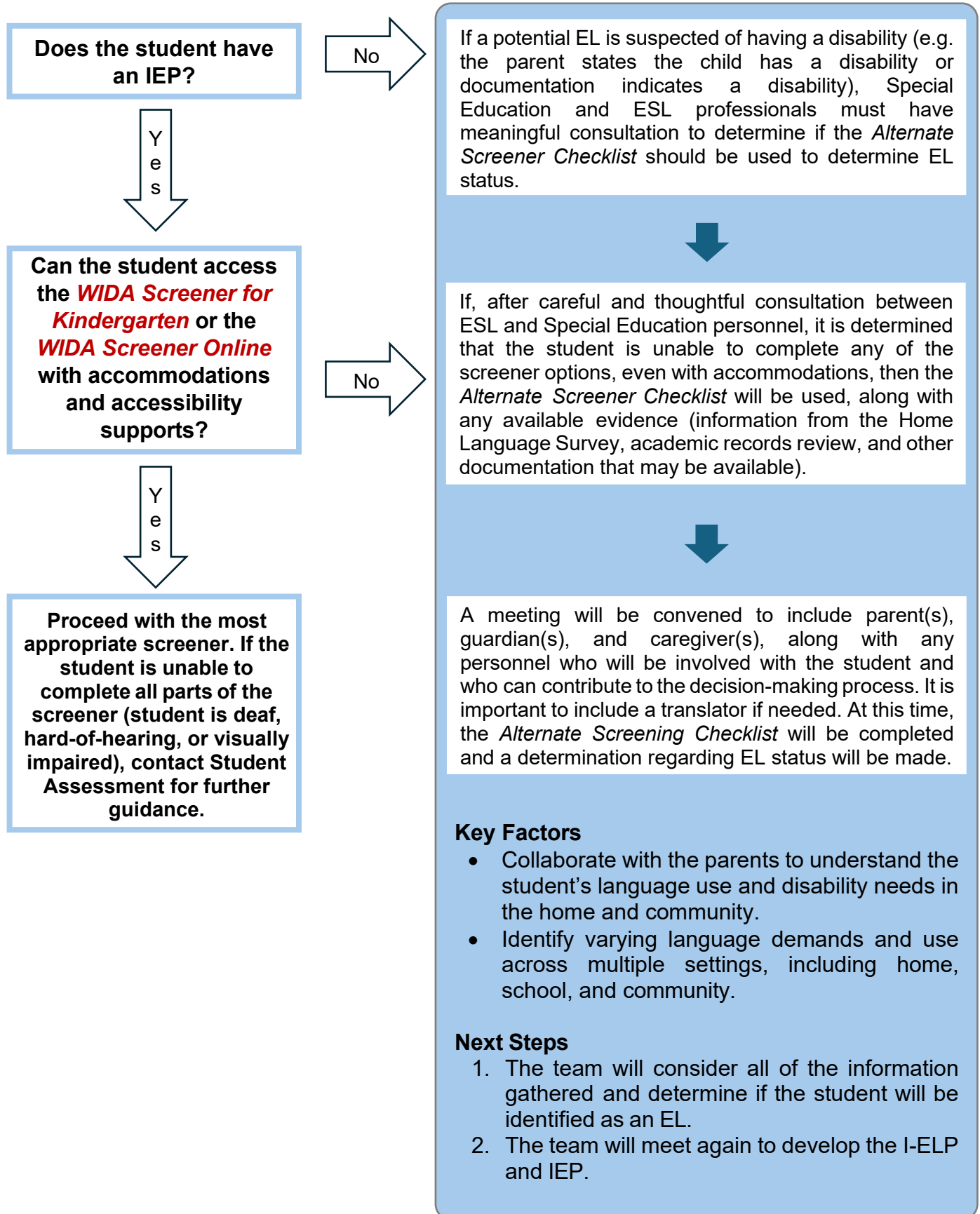
The [Alternate Screener Checklist](#) is to be used for those potential EL students who cannot participate meaningfully on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online, even with accommodations. The [Alternate Screener Checklist](#) is for **severely cognitively disabled** students and is not intended for those students with disabilities who can participate with the use of accessibility supports and/or accommodations. This checklist provides educators with a mechanism to ensure that students with profound disabilities can be identified and provided the services they need. Additionally, educators may listen to a recorded webinar at: [Alternate Screener Checklist Recorded Webinar](#).

Definition of an English Learner with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities are defined as individuals who have one or more disabilities that **significantly limit** their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as documented in their IEP and I-ELP who require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade and age appropriate curriculum, and who are progressing toward English language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding.

Alternate Screener Checklist Flowchart

Use the flowchart to determine the steps that should be taken during this process.



Administration of EL Assessments

Training Requirements

This is the most current information available on training at the time of publication. Visit the WIDA website to stay up to date on the upcoming changes to training modules and requirements. [Website](#)

Every educator who will administer the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Screener Online, WIDA ACCESS, or WIDA Alternate ACCESS must complete the required training modules each year.

1. **WIDA ACCESS Training Course - Test Administrators must complete online training modules annually. [Website](#)**
2. Must attend Test Security/Test Administration training provided by the DTC/EL Coordinator or Student Assessment **annually**. DTCs are responsible for ensuring that annual **Test Security** training is provided, which includes the following:
 - *Test Security Policy*
 - *Security and Confidentiality Statement for Administering and Reporting Student Data on the Website*
 - *Alabama Ethics in Test Administration*
 - *Alabama State Department of Education Digital Device Policy for ACAP Testing*
 - All applicable Oaths

Additionally, DTCs must also ensure that any educator who will administer either the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Screener Online, WIDA ACCESS, or WIDA Alternate ACCESS receives test administration training provided by Student Assessment via recorded webinars. Test Administration training prepares educators to administer the EL assessments and screeners and should be provided 3-4 weeks before testing. This training is required for anyone who will administer either of the screeners. It is the responsibility of the DTC to ensure that the training has been completed and the appropriate forms signed and submitted to the DTC.

All required documents must be signed and kept on file by the DTC. If monitored, it is expected that the *District/School Report of Training* form with signatures of attendees during face-to-face or virtual trainings will be available for review. Additionally, signed documentation must be available to verify that training was attended. **DTCs must be able to provide certificates of completion of the WIDA online training modules** to indicate that educators have passed the applicable courses. This may be in the form of a copy of the certification(s), an Excel file, or access to the WIDA portal in order to verify scores.

For more information on WIDA Screeners, see the [WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Test Administrator Manual | WIDA Secure Portal](#) and/or the [WIDA Screener Online Test Administration Manual | WIDA Secure Portal](#).

3. **WIDA ACCESS Training Course** – All non-test administrators, such as DTCs, EL Coordinators, etc., should complete training modules once to orient themselves with the assessment, but annual certification is not required.

Annual Retraining

DTCs and/or EL Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring that Test Administrators for any of the assessments, including the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online have completed the online training modules each year.

Any educator who will administer any of the following assessments for EL students:

- WIDA Screener for Kindergarten
- WIDA Screener Online
- WIDA ACCESS Paper/Online
- Kindergarten ACCESS
- WIDA Alternate ACCESS

must **ANNUALLY** complete the online training modules for the test(s) they will administer during the year. Completion of training is good for one full year, so educators need to be aware of when they choose to complete the modules/Knowledge Checks. The **WIDA Annual Training Verification Form** must be completed each year. The DTC will complete the form and keep on file. Test Administrators should also keep a copy.

For ease of monitoring this requirement, training should be done at the same time each year for each district. For example, educators who complete training on May 1 would be qualified to screen/test students up until May 1 of the following year. **Districts will make the decision** as to when educators should complete the online training modules/quizzes. It is suggested that a training window be identified to ensure there is ample time to complete this required training.

DTCs are able to view certificates in the **WIDA Secure Portal** to confirm that annual retraining has been completed. Alabama does not require that annual retraining be completed within WIDA's school term. Annual training runs from Month/Year through Month/Year (for example: April 2024 – April 2025). WIDA's school term is irrelevant. Therefore, any educator who completes the online training modules during the previous year's school term is not required to retake the quizzes when WIDA's school term begins, as long as the training is completed within a year's time.

Online training on the WIDA website, though required, **does not exclude** educators from attending Test Administration and Test Security training provided by Student Assessment.

The **WIDA Annual Training Verification Form** and the **WIDA Screener for Kindergarten** and **WIDA Screener Online Test Administration Manual** can be accessed using the links provided. Your **WIDA Secure Portal** login credentials may be required to access materials.

Assessments for English Learners

In order to determine if ELs are progressing toward the attainment of the English language, WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS are administered annually to all EL students in Grades K-12, including those whose parents/guardians have waived services. Students who have attained English language proficiency and are coded as FEL-1, FEL-2, FEL-3, FEL-4, or FEL **WILL NOT** take either of these assessments.

WIDA ACCESS: What to Expect in 2025-2026

WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Kindergarten ACCESS are undergoing changes for the 2025-2026 school year. Visit the WIDA website at to stay up-to-date on the upcoming changes. [Website](#)

WIDA ACCESS Online



WIDA ACCESS Online is a semi-adaptive test, meaning students are challenged to demonstrate their English language abilities as they move through each of the four domains. WIDA ACCESS online is administered to students in Grades 1-12. Students taking WIDA ACCESS online must first take the Reading and Listening tests, as their performance on these tests determines the **tiered** form of the Writing and Speaking tests they will take.

As students take the Reading and Listening tests, the test engine is scoring each folder within the test. Based on their performance in an individual folder, the test engine will determine the next appropriate folder. The test engine tracks the performance of the students for Reading and Listening and immediately determines the tier placement for Speaking and Writing. The Speaking and Writing tests are not adaptive, and students will complete all tasks.

The following tiers may be determined:

Speaking Tiers	Writing Tiers
Pre- A	A
A	B/C
B/C	

The Pre-A tier is generally for those students who are in the beginning stages of English language development. Newly arrived EL students may be placed into Pre-A. Students placed into Pre-A will be provided with more supports during testing and will be given a more simplified version of the Speaking test practice. These students must test in a different session than students who are assigned a Tier A or B/C form of the test.

Alabama requires all LEAs to use the online format. However, if an EL student has a disability or unique situation that prohibits him/her from meaningfully accessing the online test, the paper test may be administered. **The paper test requires ALSDE approval.**

NEW: In the event that a student needs a paper version of the test, the ***DTC will make the actual requests in the method that Student Assessment has designated.***

WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten

WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten is a paper-based test individually administered to kindergarten students in a game-like, interactive format. Students are assessed in the four domains of Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. Students are tested until they reach their performance ceiling for a given part. Within each section, the tasks increase in difficulty, targeting WIDA English language proficiency levels.



The test is administered individually and scored by the Test Administrator. These scored tests are sent to the vendor, DRC, for processing into score reports. WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten scores and score reports are provided in the same format as those for WIDA ACCESS Online.

WIDA ACCESS Paper

ACCESS for ELLs Paper Listening, Reading, and Writing Domain Clusters



ACCESS for ELLs Paper Speaking Domain Clusters



WIDA ACCESS Paper is a paper-based, semi-adaptive test administered to students in Grades 1-12. The Reading, Listening, and Writing tests are scored by trained raters. The Speaking test is locally scored by a trained Test Administrator. WIDA ACCESS Paper is administered in three sessions. Listening and Reading are the first session, Writing is the second session, and Speaking is the third session.

Tier selection must be made prior to ordering the paper form of the test.

Proficiency Level				
1—Entering	2—Emerging	3—Developing	4—Expanding	5—Bridging
Tier A			Tier B/C	
Tier A is most appropriate for ELLs who - Have arrived in the U.S. or entered school in the U.S. within the current academic school year without previous English instruction - Currently receive literacy instruction only in a language other than English - Have recently tested at a beginner level of English language proficiency			Tier B/C is most appropriate for ELLs who - Have social language proficiency and are beginning to approach or have acquired academic language proficiency in English - Have acquired some literacy in English or are approaching grade level literacy in English - Will likely meet the state’s exit criteria for support services by the end of the current academic year	

Students will typically need to be placed into Tier B/C. There is a better opportunity for the student to demonstrate what they know and can do at this level. If there is a chance that the student may be able to exit, place the student in Tier B/C.

Students placed in Tier A will not have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency past a level 2. Newly arrived and young ELs will probably need to be placed in Tier A.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS

WIDA Alternate ACCESS was redesigned in 2024 to incorporate the following:

- Kindergarten is included in the new K-2 grade level cluster
- Includes brand new test content and a new test item type
- Contains an Individual Characteristic Questionnaire (ICQ) which will be reported on the Individual Score Report (ISR)
- Incorporates the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition.

The assessment remains a paper-based test that is individually administered and designed specifically for those EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who, due to their disabilities, would be unable to meaningfully participate on the WIDA ACCESS assessment. WIDA Alternate ACCESS meets the U.S. Federal requirements under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), for monitoring and reporting ELs' progress toward English language proficiency.

EL students will be tested on the same four domains as students participating on WIDA ACCESS – Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. Test scores can be used to guide instruction and monitor progress. All domains are scored by the Test Administrator.

NEW: It is no longer necessary to submit a request form for permission for students to take the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment. As long as the student is marked correctly in PowerSchool Special Programs as being on *Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards*, the alternate test version will be ordered for them.

ACCESS Testing and EL Transfers Within the State

If an EL student transfers from one district to another district within the state, it is incumbent upon the receiving district to make contact with the sending district to determine the student's testing status. If an EL student tests in the receiving district, but has tested earlier in the sending district, the latter of the tests will be invalidated.

Caution: Do not test the student until testing status has been confirmed! If this cannot be accomplished, contact Student Assessment. It is a violation of State policy to test students twice!

ACCESS Testing and EL Transfers from Other WIDA States

It is the responsibility of the receiving district to make contact with the district in the sending state to determine the student's ACCESS testing status before administering ACCESS. If an EL student tests in the receiving district, but has tested earlier in the sending district, the latter of the tests will be invalidated.

Caution: Do not test the student until testing status has been confirmed! If this cannot be accomplished, contact Student Assessment. It is a violation of State policy to test students twice!

Participation on State Assessments

All EL students must participate in the ACAP for accountability purposes. EL students in Grades K-12 will participate on the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS until such time the student exits the program and enters the 4-year monitoring phase. EL students who are in their first 12 months of enrollment in a United States (U.S.) school are required to take the math and science (if applicable) test(s) for the *ACAP Summative and ACAP Alternate* assessments. Flexibility is granted for the Reading/Language Arts tests **ONLY**. There is no flexibility for participation on ACT assessments. All ACT assessments must be taken.

ELs in Their First 12 Months of Enrollment in a U.S. School

For recently arrived ELs who have been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months ESSA allows the following flexibility:

- A. Exempt a recently-arrived EL from **one administration** of the Reading/Language Arts assessment (these students must take the math and, if applicable, the science

assessments).

- B. Exclude their results on the math and science assessments for the purpose of accountability (achievement). Participation on WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS will count towards participation.
- C. Include their achievement results for all content tests in years two and beyond.

These students will take the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment, and the reading score from either of these tests will be used for accountability. If an EL student in their first twelve months of enrollment in a U.S. school **chooses** to participate on the *ACAP Summative* or *ACAP Alternate* reading test, the score for that reading test **will not** be included for the purpose of accountability. These students will be counted as participants toward meeting the 95% participation requirement for accountability purposes.

Note: There is no form that must be used to document if a first-year EL student uses the flexibility and does not participate in the Reading/Language Arts assessment of *ACAP Summative* or *ACAP Alternate*.

For the purpose of accountability, students identified as LEP 1 (EL 1) will have their WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS reading scores used to document participation in the assessment.

See below for *Decision Chart for English Learner Students in Their First 12 Months of Enrollment in U.S. Schools*.



Decision Chart

for English Learner Students in Their First 12 Months of Enrollment in U.S. Schools

This Decision Chart lists the State assessments for which the EL student in his/her first 12 months of enrollment **must participate.**

Use the chart below to help clarify the participation of English Learner (EL) students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools on State assessments. The EL Committee must include decisions regarding the criteria outlined below in the Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP). These decisions must be made on an individual basis. If you have questions concerning special situations, please contact Student Assessment at: (334) 694-4817.

Grades 2-8 ACAP Summative	Grade 10 PreACT Secure	Grade 11 ACT with Writing	Grade 12 ACT WorkKeys optional
Mathematics Science <i>Grades 4, 6, 8 only</i>	Mathematics Science Reading English	Mathematics Science Reading English Writing	Applied Math Graphic Literacy Workplace Documents

Flexibility given to EL students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools pertains to the academic content assessments in reading and English language arts – excluding all of the ACT assessments - for accountability purposes. Participation in reading and English language arts, though not required, is also not prohibited. The EL Committee must be included when making decisions about participation in reading and English language arts.

All EL students in Grades K-12, regardless of the number of years of enrollment in U.S. schools, must participate in WIDA ACCESS, the state-administered English language proficiency test, or WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

EL students who participate in WIDA Alternate ACCESS must also be assessed on the ACAP Alternate. Contact Student Assessment for guidance for EL students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools who are also participating on the ACAP Alternate.

Assessments are subject to change.

Flexibility is not extended to ELs in their first 12 months of enrollment for any of the ACT assessments.

Accommodations for English Learners on State Assessments

Decisions regarding appropriate accommodations for EL students must be made on an individual basis by the EL Committee. The EL Committee should consider the content and nature of each specific assessment and the level of the student's language proficiency when making decisions about appropriate accommodations for assessments and the students' instructional program.

ELs with Disabilities and Accessibility Supports and/or Accommodations

EL students with disabilities must be provided appropriate accessibility supports and/or accommodations on all State assessments, including all assessments for EL students. Decisions regarding appropriate accessibility supports and/or accommodations must be made on an individual basis by the IEP Team and the I-ELP Committee. These decisions must ensure the supports provided are effective for meeting the unique individual needs of the EL student. When considering accommodations for EL students, it is important to focus on the effectiveness of each accommodation for each individual student. Not only does an EL students' English language proficiency influence accommodation effectiveness, but so do other factors, including their literacy development in English, their native language, grade, age, affective needs, and time in United States schools. Keep in mind that the purpose of accommodations is not to improve EL students' rate of passing assessments, but to allow a more accurate demonstration of their knowledge of the content being assessed.

All students who have been **identified** as an EL student may receive accommodations even if they do not participate in the district's English learner program or receive ESL services or English Language Development (ELD) services. FELs may receive any of the allowable EL accommodations on the State assessments as long as they are used regularly in the classroom and are written into an I-ELP for the student.

Schools should monitor how EL students in the classroom benefit from English learner-specific supports when determining accommodations for assessments. Selected accessibility supports and/or accommodations for the classroom and on State tests must be documented in the student's IEP and I-ELP. Accessibility supports and/or accommodations provided on assessments must mirror what the student receives in the classroom on a regular basis. Additionally, The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) stipulates the following:

English learner students must be assessed in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency.

The ALSDE, in order to meet this federal requirement, has waived prior practice of the math and science tests in Spanish on the *ACAP Summative* and all parts of the *ACT WorkKeys* assessment for those students for whom the I-ELP team has determined would benefit from a Spanish form of the test.

EL students who **DO NOT have a learning disability and have only an I-ELP** are eligible for all of the accessibility supports and allowable EL accommodations as dictated by each assessment. Refer to the *ASAP Manual* and supporting documentation for each specific assessment for further information on accessibility supports and accommodations for each of the State's assessments.

ACAP Testing Supports Form

All EL students are required to have accessibility supports and/or accommodations entered on the *Testing Supports Form* in Ellevation.

Testing Supports Forms must also be completed in PowerSchool. Paper copies may still be used internally, but the form must be completed in PowerSchool for any student requiring accessibility supports and/or accommodations (ASAP Manual).

For dually-identified students, it is necessary for the Special Education Case Manager and the EL Case Manager to work together so that one form is submitted in PSSP.

Guidance for EL Committees Regarding Participation on State Assessments in Spanish

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stipulates the following:

English Learner students must be assessed in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic content areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency.

English Learner (EL) students have the opportunity to take the Mathematics and Science tests (if applicable) of the *ACAP Summative* and all parts of *ACT WorkKeys* in Spanish, until the EL student attains English language proficiency. Alabama has defined English language proficiency as a 4.8 composite score on WIDA ACCESS.

The decision to administer a state assessment in Spanish is made by the school's EL Committee and becomes part of the student's Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP); therefore, this is not an administrative decision. The determination should not be based solely on the fact that the student is a Spanish speaker. The EL Committee should carefully consider the following:

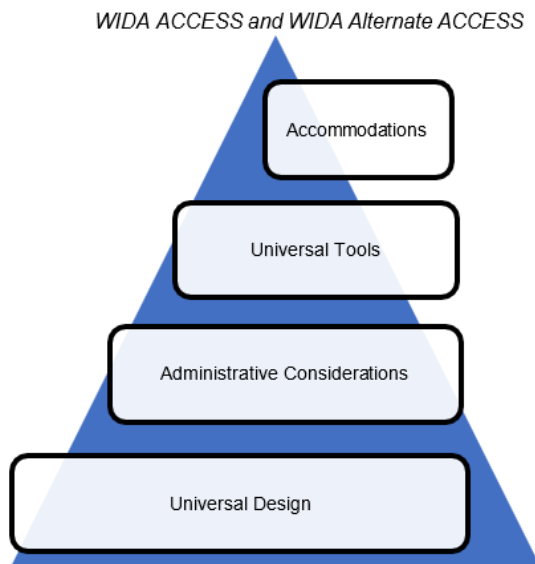
- Is the student literate in Spanish? Not all students who speak Spanish fluently have a strong command of the written language. Without strong literacy in the Spanish language, students will likely not benefit from this form of the assessment.
- Is there enough evidence to indicate the Spanish form of the assessment is most likely to yield accurate data?

EL students who will be administered the Spanish form of the assessments are not required to have prior practice of this accommodation on classroom assessments or tests. This accommodation is available to any EL student, for whom the EL Committee feels is in the best interest of the student, as documented in the I-ELP.

Accommodations on WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS

Accommodations are allowed on WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS for EL students with an IEP/504 Plan. Decisions regarding these accommodations must be made by both the IEP Teams and I-ELP committees. An I-ELP alone does not qualify a student for accommodations. There are **no EL accommodations** for WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS. These assessments are for the purpose of determining a student's level of English proficiency, so the "traditional" EL accommodations would not be appropriate.

Levels of Support on EL Assessments



WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS incorporate **Universal Design** principles in order to provide greater accessibility for all ELs. This includes multiple modalities, test items include prompts with animations and graphics, embedded scaffolding, chunking, and modeling.

- **Universal Design Principles** are the bedrock of the WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments. This process encourages the use of graphic support, scaffolding, and thematic grouping of items to make it easier for all learners to engage with test content and show what they know and can do.
- **Administrative Considerations (Available to all EL students)** include Test Timing and Scheduling, Test Environment, Test Content Presentation, and Test Item Responses. Each of these are comprised of individual administration procedures that provide flexibility for all students. Administrative Considerations do not change what the test is designed to measure or the way the scores will be interpreted. Administrative Considerations must be selected prior to the test.
- **Universal Tools (Available to all EL students)** are available to all students in order to address their individual accessibility needs. These supports may be embedded in the online test or provided by test administrators during testing. Universal tools do not affect the construct being measured on the assessments. **NOTE: These supports should not be allowed unless they are being used with success in the classroom.**
- **Accommodations (IEP/Section 504 Plan required)** are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access for a student by overcoming the effects of a disability on any of the EL assessments. These changes allow students to effectively demonstrate their knowledge and skills while generating valid assessment results. The *WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual* is available in the **Resources** section in the WIDA Secure Portal and is a valuable resource that contains detailed information regarding each of **the allowable accommodations**.

Students Unable to Participate on WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS

“Less Than Four Domains Exemption”

EL students with disabilities are often unable to access the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessments even with the appropriate accommodations supports. For example, some EL students may be non-verbal, blind, deaf, or hard of hearing. There may be very unique circumstances that would prohibit a meaningful testing experience for these students.

ESSA requires that:

a state provide appropriate accommodations for ELs with disabilities and, if an EL has a disability that precludes assessment in one or more domains of the English Language Proficiency assessment such that there are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain, assess the student’s ELP based on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student (34 CFR § 200.6(h)(4)).

In an effort to prevent these students from having to attempt a test that would ultimately provide little if any valuable data, WIDA has developed an exemption policy. For EL students for whom a disability such as blindness, deafness, or lack of speech would prevent full participation on either of the assessments, an exemption from one or more domains may be appropriate.

Note: Students cannot be exempt from all four domains. At least two domains must be administered.

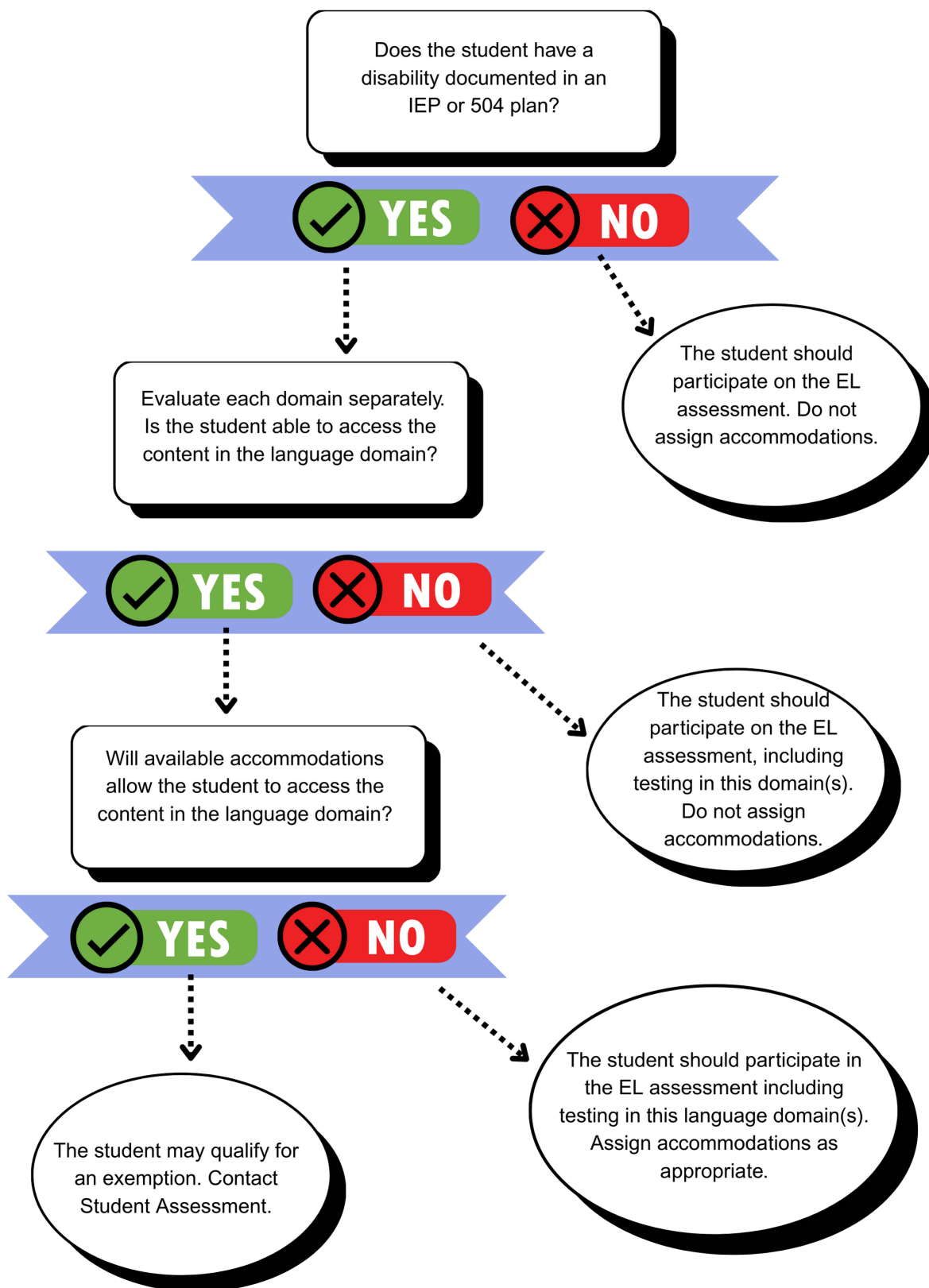
The **Less Than Four Domains Exemption** allows EL students, for whom participation on one or more domains is unattainable, to be exempt from the domain(s) for which participation is prohibitive. Refer to the Domain Exemption Decision Tree on the following page.

NEW: This exemption requires ALSDE approval. In the event that a student needs to test in less than four domains, the ***DTC will make the actual requests in the method that Student Assessment has designated.***

Alternate Exit Criteria for WIDA Alternate Access: Less Than Four Domains Tested

In instances where a student is missing a test score in one or more domains related to their disability, composite & scale scores will be calculated using reweighted formulas. To determine if a student who tests in less than four domains qualifies for exit from the ESL program, contact Nancy Blanco at nancy.blanco@alsde.edu. This process will be reevaluated at the end of the year upon evaluation of student data.

Domain Exemption Tree



Data Validation Process

Data Validation is the process of reviewing student test records after all testing has been completed to identify errors in demographic data and make corrections before score reports are produced. The process is designed to identify and verify student demographics, accommodations, and test records that could potentially contain errors. Alabama has a Data Validation Pre-Reporting window each year. This is the only time the process can take place. **Failure to perform the process will inevitably result in erroneous student test data that cannot be changed, therefore the SEA completes the Data Validation process annually.** The SEA also manages the FINAL data file, which is then used to calculate EL Growth.

For more information or questions regarding the Data Validation Process, contact Student Assessment at studentassessment@alsde.edu.

WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS Score Reports

EL students will receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) that contains detailed information about a student's performance on each section of the WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment. The ISR provides a snapshot of how well the student understands and can produce the language needed to access academic content and succeed in school. The ISR shows both a **proficiency level** and **scale score** for each of the four domains of Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking.

Language Domain	Proficiency Level (Possible 1.0-6.0)	Scale Score (Possible 100-600) and Confidence Band See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions
	1 2 3 4 5 6	100 200 300 400 500 600
Listening 	6.0	397
Speaking 	5.0	374
Reading 	5.8	353
Writing 	3.8	329
Oral Language 50% Listening + 50% Speaking	6.0	386
Literacy 50% Reading + 50% Writing	4.2	341
Comprehension 70% Reading + 30% Listening	6.0	366
Overall* 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking	4.8	354

*Overall score is calculated only when all four domains have been assessed. NA: Not available

Types of Score Reports

Note: At the time of publication, this was the most current information available about WIDA score reports. Visit the WIDA website for updates as they are released about changes occurring during the 2025-2026 school year.

Score reports are available for view in the WIDA AMS portal for both WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS. Score reports are made available by DRC in the DRC INSIGHT Portal based

upon the State's testing calendar. DRC will also mail printed reports to each district. Reports can also be printed from the portal in a variety of languages.

Report	Description
Individual Student Report (ISR), Parent Score Report Guide, and the Parent Letter	The Individual Student Report contains detailed information about the performance of a single student for Grades K-12 for WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Alternate ACCESS. This report includes scale scores and language proficiency levels for each language domain. The ISR is available in 47 different languages through WIDA AMS: www.wida-ams.us. The translated report should accompany (not replace) the official report in English. The Parent Score Report Guide is available in 16 languages for students taking WIDA ACCESS and/or WIDA Alternate ACCESS and should accompany the ISR. The Parent Score Report Guide is available at wida.wisc.edu under RESOURCES. The Parent Letter is available in 47 languages and is meant to accompany the WIDA ACCESS and/or WIDA Alternate ACCESS score reports as an explanation for parents and guardians. The letters are editable so schools can personalize some of the information. The Parent Letter is available at wida.wisc.edu under RESOURCES.
Student Roster Report	The Student Roster Report contains information on a group of students within a single school and grade. It provides scale scores and language proficiency levels for individual students on each language domain and four composites by school, grade, student, and grade level cluster. This report is useful when looking for patterns in student performance.
School Frequency Report	The School Frequency Report provides information about the number and percent of tested students to attain each proficiency level for each language domain and four composites within one school and grade. No students are identified on this report.
District Frequency Report	The District Frequency Report contains information about the number of students and percent of total tested students at each proficiency level for each language domain and four composites by proficiency levels for grades within a district. No students are identified on this report.
English Learner Student Unable to Participate on One or More Domains of WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS	The English Learner Student Unable to Participate on One or More Domains of WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS is provided to students who were approved for the "Less Than Four Domains Exemption." WIDA calculates the scores, and Student Assessment provides districts with an ISR.

WIDA ACCESS Score Reporting

The WIDA ACCESS Score Reports provide a detailed report of a single student’s performance, including Proficiency Level and Scale Scores for each language domain and four composite areas. Test scores can be used to:

- Monitor student progress annually (using scores from two years or more).
- Guide IEP teams in making determinations about the types of language acquisition supports the student needs.
- Inform classroom instruction.
- Guide the decision-making process.

WIDA ACCESS Proficiency Levels

Proficiency levels are interpretive scores. In other words, they are based on - but separate from - Scale Scores. The Proficiency Level Score describes the student’s performance in terms of the six WIDA English Language Proficiency Levels.

Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 Reaching
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The Proficiency Level Score is a whole number followed by a decimal. The whole number reflects the student’s proficiency level, and the number after the decimal reflects how far the student has progressed within that level. For example, a student with a score of a 2.7 is at proficiency level 2 and is over halfway toward achieving proficiency level 3. Additionally, each ISR explains the proficiency level the student achieved in terms of what the student can do using English.

Proficiency levels can be used:

- to make comparisons across domains,
- with the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to develop a student-specific English language skill profile, and
- as one of multiple criteria to determine a student’s eligibility for English language support services.

Caution should be used when comparing proficiency level scores across grades. Proficiency Level Scores are grade and domain-specific. In other words, they translate differently at each grade level.

WIDA ACCESS Scale Scores

Scale Scores precisely track student growth over time and across grade levels. Because Scale Scores take into account differences in item difficulty, they place all students on a single continuum that stretches from kindergarten through Grade 12. In addition, scale scores allow you to compare student performance across grades, within each domain, with more granularity than you will see with proficiency levels. For example, you can track a student’s reading ability from grade to grade.

Scale Scores are not Raw Scores. A Raw Score is simply the number of correct responses a student provides. Raw Scores are not reported for WIDA ACCESS because they do not provide a meaningful measure of student performance.

Scale Scores can be used:

- To make comparisons across grade levels, but NOT ACROSS DOMAINS. A Scale Score in listening is not the same as a Scale Score in Reading.
- To monitor student growth over time within a domain.



In addition to Proficiency Level Scores and Scale Scores for each domain, students also receive a Proficiency Level Score and a Scale Score for different combinations of the domains. These Composite Scores are Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall. Composite scores are comprised of:

Oral Language	(50% Listening + 50% Speaking)
Literacy	(50% Reading + 50% Writing)
Comprehension	(70% Reading + 30 Listening)
Overall Score (Composite Score)	(35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening +15% Speaking)

Proficiency Level Scores are always calculated from Scale Scores. For example, the Reading and Writing Scale Scores are averaged to create a Literacy Scale Score. The Literacy Scale Score is then associated with a Literacy Proficiency Level.

Composite Scores demand careful consideration. Students with identical Composite Scores might have very different profiles in terms of oral language and literacy development. One student may have a very high Speaking score and another student may have a very high Reading score, but because a high score on one domain can inflate a Composite Score, a student’s individual performance on each domain is more informative than a single Composite Score.

Students rarely acquire proficiency across all domains at the same time. Often, oral language skills such as listening and speaking develop faster than literacy skills such as writing and reading. At the same time, receptive language skills such as listening and reading often develop faster than productive language skills such as speaking and writing. Writing typically takes the longest to develop.

Every student’s growth will be different. Younger students tend to make progress more quickly than older students and those at a more advanced proficiency level. Students with strong literacy backgrounds in a home language are likely to acquire literacy in English at a faster pace than a student with lower levels of home language literacy.

Interpretation of Student Scores

- WIDA ACCESS scores provide information on students' English proficiency. They do not measure students' academic achievement or content knowledge.
- The WIDA ACCESS 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 group of students.
- WIDA recommends using WIDA ACCESS scores as one of multiple pieces of information that inform high-stakes reclassification or exit decisions. Schoolwork, in-class assessments, and educator insights are all valuable evidence that can help you understand a student's English language proficiency and development.

Kindergarten ACCESS Score Reporting

Kindergarten ACCESS is designed with age-appropriate tasks that presume students are still developing full literacy skills. Because the kindergarten test does not assess advanced reading and writing skills, kindergartners cannot earn a Scale Score above 400, a Reading Proficiency Level above 5.0, or a Writing Proficiency Level above 4.5.



**Highest possible proficiency levels on WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten:
Listening: 6.0 Reading: 5.0 Speaking: 6.0 Writing: 4.5**

Interpretation of WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten Student Scores

As with the other WIDA assessments, WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten scores provide information on a student's English proficiency. Scores do not measure a student's academic achievement or content knowledge. These scores should be used for instructional planning purposes.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Score Reporting

WIDA Alternate ACCESS score reports provide score information for eight categories: four domains and four composite scores (Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, Overall). WIDA Alternate ACCESS scores have many potential uses, from determining the placement of individual students to guiding instruction. Test scores can be used to:

- Monitor student progress annually (using scores from two years or more).
- Guide IEP teams in making determinations about the types of language acquisition supports the student needs.
- Inform classroom instruction.
- Guide the decision-making process.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Proficiency Levels

The Alternate Proficiency Levels range from Level 1: Entering to Level 5: Bridging and are calculated from scale scores. Proficiency Level Scores describe the student's performance in terms of the five WIDA Alternate English Language Proficiency Levels. WIDA Alternate ACCESS Proficiency Level Scores can be used:

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

Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors (Alternate PLDs)

The Alternate PLDs are an extension of the PLDs found in the *WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards*, 2020 Edition, and describe the continuum of language development for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Alternate PLDs are organized into five levels of English language proficiency for two communication modes: Interpretive and Expressive. These Alternate PLDs are unique to WIDA Alternate ACCESS.



WIDA Alternate ACCESS Scale Scores

Scale Scores allow educators to 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 Kindergarten through Grade 12. WIDA Alternate ACCESS Scale Scores can be used:

- 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 Scale Score of 931 in Speaking.
- To monitor students or groups of students' performances across grades and within each domain over time.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Composite Scores

In addition to Proficiency Level Scores and Scale Scores for each domain, students also receive a Proficiency Level Score and a Scale Score for different combinations of the domains. These Composite Scores are Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall.

Composite Scores are comprised of:

Oral Language	(50% Listening + 50% Speaking)
Literacy	(50% Reading + 50% Writing)
Comprehension	(70% Reading + 30 Listening)
Overall Score (Composite Score)	(35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening +15% Speaking)

Composite Scores, just like with WIDA ACCESS 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 with their disabilities. 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.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Interpretation of Student Scores

WIDA Alternate ACCESS 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.

Alabama's ESSA Indicators

Interim Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (TITLE I, SECTION 1111(C)(4)(A)(II))

What does “interim progress” mean in terms of accountability regarding English Learners? Making annual increases in the percent of children making progress in learning English

How is interim progress for ELs determined?

- Proficiency level of the EL
- Targets for annual increases in English proficiency and attainment of English using a baseline
- Consistent methods and measurements to indicate progress in English proficiency (WIDA ACCESS)

Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency – Cumulative Growth

Title I of *ESSA* requires long-term goals for English learners for increases in the percentage of such students making progress in achieving **English Language Proficiency (ELP)** as measured by the statewide English language proficiency assessment. Alabama will use WIDA ACCESS to evaluate progress toward English language proficiency.

Cumulative Growth is used to calculate the expected progress ELs make toward English language proficiency. **Cumulative Growth** is when the previous year's growth is compared to the current year's growth target to determine the student's expected level of proficiency. Student growth expectations will increase each year, so students meet the proficiency cut score within seven years after their initial year. The proficiency cut score is a composite score of 4.8 on WIDA ACCESS.

The number of years to achieve proficiency varies based on the student's initial level of proficiency. Students at lower levels of English language proficiency will have more ambitious annual growth targets. Refer to **Table 1** below.

Prior Year	Current Year
1.0	1.6
1.1	1.7
1.2	1.8
1.3	1.9
1.4	2.0
1.5	2.1
1.6	2.1
1.7	2.2
1.8	2.3
1.9	2.4
2.0	2.6
2.1	2.6
2.2	2.7
2.3	2.8
2.4	2.9
2.5	3.0
2.6	3.0
2.7	3.1
2.8	3.2
2.9	3.3
3.0	3.5
3.1	3.5
3.2	3.6
3.3	3.7
3.4	3.8
3.5	3.8
3.6	3.9
3.7	4.0
3.8	4.1
3.9	4.1
4.0	4.3
4.1	4.3
4.2	4.4
4.3	4.5
4.4	4.5
4.5	4.6
4.6	4.7
4.7	4.7
4.8	4.8

Growth Calculations

The overall goal of the EL student data in the annual accountability system is to identify actual growth of EL students, year-over-year, towards proficiency attainment. Therefore, the data loaded within the student assessment portal recognizes the annual growth of each student utilizing the student's ACCESS proficiency score from the previous year compared to the current year's score.

Growth is determined when the prior year's score on the WIDA ACCESS assessment is compared to the current year's score to determine if there is growth. For example, using the table to the left: Prior year score was 3.1. In order to demonstrate growth, the current year's score must be a 3.5 or higher. If the student makes a 3.5 that student met the growth target and will be counted as showing growth in the accountability calculations. If the student made a 3.2, the student did not meet the growth target and will not be counted as making growth in the accountability calculations.

Since growth is determined based upon the prior year's score, students who do not have a score from the previous year will not receive a growth report. N/A will represent a non-score.

Currently, there is no growth requirement for WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

Interim Progress

For the purpose of accountability, interim progress refers to the annual increases in the percent of students making progress in learning English. Progress is calculated by using the scores from WIDA ACCESS.

Growth Targets

The table below shows the percentage of EL students within a district that must make the progress target in order to meet the English Language Proficiency (ELP) indicator. Each year, the proportion of students in a district is expected to make progress in ELP gains.

Target Percentages

Progress Targets Based on Previous Year’s Data	
YEAR	TARGETS
2022	52%
2023	54%
2024	56%
2025	58%
2026	60%
2027	62%
2028	64%

For example, in 2026, 60% of ELs in a district who took WIDA ACCESS would need to meet/exceed their growth target to meet the interim progress indicator.

Part V: Immigrant Children and Youth

Reservation From Title III

The SEA can reserve funds, up to 20%, off the top of the Title III allocation for Immigrant Children and Youth.

To determine if an LEA is eligible for funding, take the two preceding years' average and compare it to the current year. If there has been a significant increase, then the LEA may be eligible for the immigrant grant.

Use of Funds

An entity receiving funds under section 3115(e) of Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act shall use the funds to pay for activities that provide enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youth and parent, family, and community engagement. Federal funds made available under this subpart shall be used so as to supplement the level of Federal, State, and local public funds that, in the absence of such availability, would have been expended for programs for English learners and immigrant children and youth and in no case to supplant such Federal, State, and local public funds (ESSA Section 3115(g)).

Grant Purpose

The purpose of this program is to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) that experience significant increases in their student population due to immigration. The grant will allow LEAs to enhance educational opportunities for immigrant children and youth. Under ESSA, the term “**Immigrant children and youth**”, means individuals who—

- (A) are aged 3-21;
- (B) were not born in any state, including Puerto Rico and Washington D.C.; and
- (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.

Definition Of Significant Increase

A significant increase is a district that experiences growth in the number of immigrant students by 10% over the previous two years.

Allowable Use of Funds

LEAs receiving funds under section 3114(d)(1) shall use the funds to pay for activities that provide enhanced instructional opportunities for immigrant children and youth, which may include:

- family literacy, parent outreach, and training activities designed to assist parents to become active participants in the education of their children;
- recruitment of, and support for, personnel including teachers and paraprofessionals specifically trained to provide services to immigrant children and youth;
- provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic or career counseling for immigrant children and youth;
- identification, development, and acquisition of curricular materials, educational software, and technologies to be used in the program;
- basic instruction services that are directly attributable to the presence in the school system involved of immigrant children and youth, including the payment of costs of providing additional classroom supplies, costs of transportation, or such other costs as are directly attributable to such additional basic instruction services;

- other instruction services that are designed to assist immigrant children and youth to achieve in elementary schools and secondary schools in the United States, such as programs of introduction to the educational system and civics education;
- activities, coordinated with community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, or other entities with expertise in working with immigrants, to assist parents of immigrant children and youth by offering comprehensive community services.

Updating Immigrant Status in PowerSchool

Immigrant status must be monitored and updated annually in PowerSchool. A student is considered an immigrant for reporting purposes only during their **first three years** in U.S. schools.

Once a student has completed **three full academic years** in U.S. schools (cumulative time need not be consecutive), the **immigrant status checkbox should be unchecked** in PowerSchool to reflect the change. Regularly reviewing this data ensures accurate federal reporting and program compliance.

Visit [PowerSchool-Alabama Edition](#) for more information and resources on this topic.

Part VI: Appendix

Key Terms for English Learners

Assessment and Testing

- WIDA ACCESS™ - Standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test. It assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within the school context across the four language domains
- WIDA Alternate ACCESS - Alternative assessment for English learners with significant cognitive disabilities.
- WIDA Screener Online - English language proficiency assessment given to students in grades 1-12 to help identify and designate English learners
- WIDA Screener for Kindergarten - Age-appropriate screening assessment for kindergarten students
- ACAP - Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program
- ISR - Individual Student Report
- Screener - Refers to WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Online assessments used for initial identification of English learners

Language Proficiency Concepts

- BICS - Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills. The language ability required for verbal face-to-face communication. Students are generally proficient in BICS in 1-2 years.
- CALP - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. The language ability required for academic achievement. Students are generally proficient in CALP in 5-7 years.
- Language Dominance - The measurement of the degree of bilingualism, which implies a comparison of the proficiencies in two or more languages.
- Language Proficiency - The degree to which the student exhibits control over the use of language, including the measurement of expressive and receptive language skills in the areas of phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics, and including the areas of pragmatics or language use within various domains or social circumstances. Proficiency in a language is judged independently and does not imply a lack of proficiency in another language.
- PLD - Proficiency Level Descriptor

Student Classifications

- EL - English learner. A student who is not yet proficient in English
- EL 1 – English learner in their first year in a U.S. school
- EL 2 – English learner in second year or more in a U.S. school
- EL 6 - English Learner Waived Services
- FEL - Former English learner; completed four years of monitoring
- FEL 1 - Former EL year in first year of monitoring
- FEL 2 - Former EL in year two of monitoring
- FEL 3 - Former EL in year three of monitoring
- FEL 4 - Former EL in year four of monitoring
- LEP - Limited-English-proficient. No longer used (See EL)
- NOMPLOTE - National Origin Minority whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English: A student whose native language is other than English and who does NOT qualify for EL services.

Language References

- L1 - Student's native language
- L2 - Student's second language (possibly more than two languages)
- HLS - Home Language Survey

Instructional Programs

- ELD - English Language Development. Program of instruction for English learners
- ESL - English as a Second Language. Program of instruction for English learners
- SEI - Structured English Immersion. Program of instruction for English learners
- TWI - Two-Way Immersion. A bilingual education program that serves both English learners and native English speakers, with instruction in both languages
- LIEP - Language Instruction Educational Program
- HQIA - High-Quality Instruction and Assessment

Standards and Planning

- WIDA™ ELD Standards - Rigorous academic language standards provided by WIDA™ for the purposes of guiding social and academic content instruction through the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, at the ELs' English language proficiency levels.
- I-ELP - An individualized EL language plan for an EL student
- IEP - Individualized Education Program
- WIDA™ Consortium - Alabama is a part of the WIDA™ consortium and adopted the WIDA™ Consortium's ELD Standards for Pre-Kindergarten–Grade 12 encompass:
 - Social and Instructional language
 - Language for Language Arts
 - Language for Mathematics
 - Language for Science
 - Language for Social Studies

Administrative and Support

- LEA - Local Education Agency
- BTC - Building Test Coordinator
- DTC - District Test Coordinator
- DRC - Data Recognition Corporation
- Ellevation - State's English learner program management system
- ASAP – Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Policy Manual

Federal Legislation

- ESSA - Every Student Succeeds Act
- ESEA - Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Legal Precedent Related to English Learners

1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” -42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Public institutions (like schools) must provide equal quality of educational services to everyone, including those who are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Title VI covers all educational programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education (ED).

May 25, 1970, Memorandum

“The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify policy on issues concerning the responsibility of LEAs to provide equal educational opportunity to national origin minority group children deficient in English language skills.”

- Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the education program offered by a LEA, the LEA must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students. School districts have the responsibility to notify national origin-minority group parents of school activities, which are called to the attention of other parents. Such notice in order to be adequate may have to be provided in a language other than English.

Lau v. Nichols (US Supreme Court Decision 1974)

“The failure of the San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program, and thus violates § 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based “on the ground of race, color, or national origin,” in “any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance,” and the implementing regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Pp. 414 U. S. 565-569.”

- The Supreme Court stated that these students should be treated with equality among the schools. Among other things, Lau reflects the now-widely accepted view that a person's language is so closely intertwined with their national origin (the country someone or their ancestors came from) that language-based discrimination is effectively a proxy for national origin discrimination.

1974 – Equal Education Opportunities Act

“The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 states: “No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual based on his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs.”

- The EEOA prohibits discriminatory conduct against, including segregating students on the basis of race, color or national origin, and discrimination against faculty and staff serving these groups of individuals, as it interferes with their equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, the EEOA requires LEAs to take action to overcome students' language barriers that impede equal participation in educational programs.

Plyler v. Doe (U.S. Supreme Court Decision 1982)

“The illegal aliens who are plaintiffs in these cases challenging the statute may claim the benefit of the Equal Protection Clause, which provides that no State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” . . . The undocumented status of these children does not establish a sufficient rational basis for denying them benefits that the State affords other residents . . . No national policy is perceived that might justify the State in denying these children an elementary education.” -457 U.S. 202

- The right to public education for immigrant students regardless of their legal status is guaranteed.
- Schools may not require proof of citizenship or legal residence to enroll or provide services to immigrant students.
- Schools may not ask about the student or a parent’s immigration status.
- Parents are not required to give a Social Security number.
- Students are entitled to receive all school services, including the following: Free or reduced breakfast or lunch, – transportation, – educational services, and – NCLB, IDEA, etc.

2016 – Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act

“Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act requires that all English Learners (ELs) receive quality instruction for learning both English and grade-level academic content. NCLB allows local flexibility for choosing programs of instruction, while demanding greater accountability for ELs’ English language and academic progress.”

- Under Title III, states are required to develop standards for English Language Proficiency and to link those standards to the state's Academic Content Standards. Schools must make sure that ELLs are part of their state's accountability system and that ELs' academic progress is followed over time by
- establishing learning standards, that is, statements of what children in that state should know and be able to do in reading, math, and other subjects at various grade levels;
- creating annual assessments (standardized tests, in most states) to measure student progress in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high schools;
- setting a level (cut-off score) at which students are considered proficient in tested areas; and
- Reporting to the public on what percentages of students are proficient, with the information broken down by race, income, disability, language proficiency, and gender subgroups.

Castañeda v. Pickard, [5th Cir., 1981] 648 F.2d 989 (US COURT OF APPEALS)

“In 1981, in the most significant decision regarding the education of language-minority students since Lau v. Nichols, the 5th Circuit Court established a three-pronged test for evaluating programs serving English language learners. According to the Castañeda standard, schools must base their program on educational theory recognized as sound or considered to be a legitimate experimental strategy, – implement the program with resources and personnel necessary to put the theory into practice, and – evaluate programs and make adjustments where necessary to ensure that adequate progress is being made. [648 F. 2d 989 (5th Circuit, 1981)].”

This case established a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of a district's program for the English language learner:

1. Is the program based on an educational theory recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is it considered by experts as a legitimate experimental strategy?
2. Are the programs and practices, including resources and personnel, reasonably calculated to implement this theory effectively?

3. Does the school district evaluate its programs and make adjustments where needed to ensure that language barriers are actually being overcome?

Frequently Asked Questions

When are EL students able to participate in AP, gifted, extracurricular and co-curricular programs?

SEAs and LEAs must provide equal opportunities for EL students to meaningfully participate in curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs and activities. [U.S. Department of Education EL Tool Kit, Chapter 4](#)

What is the federal authority requiring districts to address the needs of English language learners?

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. In *Lau v. Nichols*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the Department of Education memorandum of May 25, 1970, which directed school districts to take steps to help limited- English proficient (EL) students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the district's educational programs

What is required to comply with Civil Rights laws for English learner students?

Federal law requires programs that educate children with limited English proficiency to be:

1. based on a sound educational theory.
2. adequately supported, with adequate and effective staff and resources, so the program has a realistic chance of success.
3. periodically evaluated and, if necessary, revised.

How do we determine grade placement for EL newcomer students with limited or interrupted formal education?

Students should be placed in age-appropriate grade level and setting.

What if parents do not want their child to have Title III services to address their English needs?

Parents may opt to not have their children enrolled in a Title III EL program. When a parent declines participation, the district still retains the responsibility to ensure that the student has an equal opportunity to have his or her English language and academic needs met. Districts can meet this obligation in a variety of ways (e.g. adequate training to classroom teachers on second language acquisition and monitoring the educational progress of the student). Students whose parents waive services are still required to be assessed annually with the State English proficiency test until the student meets the exit criteria. For more information on Alabama's ELP assessment see [WIDA ACCESS \(wisc.edu\)](#)

How long does a district have to provide support services to EL students?

EL students are assessed annually using the WIDA ACCESS assessment. The results are used to create the student's Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP). Students are reclassified as Former ELs (FEL) when they meet the State's exit criteria. FELs are monitored for four years.

Resources

Inclusion of a link is not an endorsement of the views expressed, the products or services offered, or of the organizations sponsoring the websites.

Agencies and Organizations

- **WIDA® Website**
Alabama is a member of the WIDA Consortium. WIDA is dedicated to the research, design, and implementation of high-quality, standards-based system for K-12 English learners.
 - **WIDA ACCESS Online Checklist**
 - **Alabama Identification and Placement Guidance**
- **The U.S. Department of Education: Website**
This serves as a resource and a gateway to other useful web pages.
- **The U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition Website**
Provides national leadership to help ensure that English learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and academic success.
- **National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition: Website**
Supports the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition.

Professional and Non-Profit Organizations

- **Center for Applied Linguistics: Website**
CAL is a private non-profit organization that aims to promote and improve the teaching and learning of languages. This is a resource for information on teaching and learning languages, and information about language and culture.
- **¡Colorín Colorado!: Website**
A bilingual site for educators and families of English language learners.
- **ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics: Website**
This site contains a long list of articles relating to language learning, using resources from within language-minority communities, model programs, and integrating world language-learning with other subject matter classes.
- **Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory: Website**
The center provides information on educational programs and general school improvement to meet the needs of special populations of children and youth, including EL students.
- **National Association for Bilingual Education: Website**
NABE is a national membership organization dedicated to addressing the educational needs of language-minority students in the U.S. and to advancing the language competencies and multicultural understanding of all Americans.
- **©TESOL International Association: Website**
TESOL's mission is to develop the expertise of its members and others involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages to help them foster effective communication in diverse settings while respecting individuals' language rights. This international organization is one of the largest professional organizations for professionals in second language acquisition and contains a variety of information about the subject.

Resources for Developing EL Programs

- **English Learner Tool Kit (OELA) [Website](#)**

OELA's EL Tool Kit was published in 2015 as a companion to support the 2015 Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) produced by the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, and the Department of Justice, outlining legal obligations for ELs. Some chapters of the tool kit have been updated related to Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

- **Newcomer Tool Kit (OELA) [Website](#)**

The Newcomer Tool Kit is designed to help U.S. educators; elementary and secondary teachers, principals, and other school staff who work directly with immigrant students—including asylees and refugees—and their families.

Language Code List

For a complete listing of PowerSchool Language Codes, visit the [ALSDE Data Code Manual](#).

Assessment Forms



Student Assessment Forms Included in This Section:

1. WIDA Annual Training Verification Form
2. Alabama State Department of Education Alternate Screener Checklist



Annual Training Verification Form

ANNUAL RECERTIFICATION IS REQUIRED FOR THE FOLLOWING TESTS:

1. *WIDA ACCESS ONLINE*
2. *WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS**
3. *WIDA ACCESS FOR KINDERGARTEN*
4. *WIDA SCREENER ONLINE*
5. *WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN*
6. *WIDA SCREENER PAPER**
7. *WIDA ACCESS PAPER**

I HAVE COMPLETED AND PASSED ANNUAL ONLINE TRAINING FOR THE TEST FOR WHICH I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING:

TEST ADMINISTRATOR PRINTED NAME

TEST ADMINISTRATOR SIGNATURE

COURSES COMPLETED	COMPLETION DATE
<i>WIDA ACCESS FOR KINDERGARTEN: ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING</i>	
<i>WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS: ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING*</i>	
<i>WIDA ACCESS ONLINE: ADMINISTRATION</i>	
<i>WIDA SCREENER ONLINE: ADMINISTRATION</i>	
<i>SPEAKING FOR GRADES 1-5: SCORING WIDA SCREENER AND WIDA ACCESS BRAILLE</i>	
<i>SPEAKING FOR GRADES 6-12: SCORING WIDA SCREENER AND WIDA ACCESS BRAILLE</i>	
<i>WRITING FOR GRADES 1-5: SCORING WIDA SCREENER (and paper)</i>	
<i>WRITING FOR GRADES 6-12: SCORING WIDA SCREENER (and paper)</i>	
<i>WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN: ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING</i>	
<i>WIDA SCREENER PAPER: ADMINISTRATION*</i>	
<i>WIDA ACCESS PAPER: ADMINISTRATION*</i>	
<i>SPEAKING FOR GRADES 1-5: SCORING WIDA ACCESS PAPER*</i>	
<i>SPEAKING FOR GRADES 6-12: SCORING WIDA ACCESS PAPER*</i>	

VERIFIED BY DISTRICT TEST COORDINATOR OR EL COORDINATOR ON (DATE): _____

DISTRICT TEST COORDINATOR / EL COORDINATOR SIGNATURE

*ALSDE approval is required for *WIDA ACCESS* paper, *Alternate ACCESS*, and *WIDA Screener Paper*. Training should not be completed unless approval has been granted.

District Test Coordinators and/or EL Coordinators will keep a copy of this form on file as documentation of training.

Alabama State Department of Education

Alternate Screening Checklist

The purpose of the *Alternate Screening Checklist* is to assist educators and families in the decision-making process for those potential English learner (EL) students who cannot meaningfully access the *WIDA Screener for Kindergarten* or the *WIDA Screener Online* (or if applicable *WIDA Screener Paper*). These screening assessments may not be appropriate for some students with disabilities. Potential EL students who may benefit from the *Alternate Screening Checklist* are:

- Students who have an IEP that indicates a significant cognitive disability
- Students who do not have an IEP, but will be evaluated by Special Education staff

If a potential EL student does not have an IEP that indicates a significant cognitive disability, but is considered to be a student who will require extensive supports, the Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) staff, in order to meet the 30-day deadline for screening potential EL students, or 10-day deadline if enrollment is after the first day of school, must have meaningful consultation to determine the possible use of the *Alternate Screening Checklist*. **This decision should be made, if there is agreement, that the student requires substantial supports and could not, even with accommodations, progress fully through any of the available screeners.**

If it is determined that the *Alternate Screening Checklist* is the most appropriate screening instrument, a team consisting of the following individuals must be convened to make the EL determination by utilizing the *Alternate Screening Checklist*:

- Person(s) with expertise in second language acquisition
- Special Education teacher
- School Counselor
- Service Professionals
- Speech or Language Impairment teacher (if applicable)
- General Education teacher
- Native Language/Sign Language Interpreter (if applicable)
- Parents, guardians, and/or caregivers

It is important that a **team-centered approach** is used to guide the decision that will be made during this process.

Alabama's Definition of an English Learner with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

English learners with the **most** significant cognitive disabilities are defined as individuals who have one or more disabilities that **significantly limit** their intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as documented in their Individualized Education Programs, who require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade and age appropriate curriculum, and who are progressing toward English language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding.

Challenges in Identifying English Learners with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

*Both language-and disability-related challenges exist in identifying students who are English learners with significant cognitive disabilities. Some of these students may not be able to access all domains on the WIDA Screener Online or WIDA Screener Paper. Therefore, when an educator uses a screener, providing accessibility features and accommodations is critical. Even with such accommodations, however, many students' intellectual disabilities may inhibit their abilities to complete the screener or acquisition of valid findings for each student. Given this limitation and to ensure states meet standards set in the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, educators with knowledge of the student's language needs must serve on the student's IEP team (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017, Ch. 6, p. 2). These experts are important assets in interpreting the student's screening results and in advising on additional criteria for determining the student status as an English learner. **Screening tools should not be the sole source of information.***

Alternate Screening Checklist

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

System: _____

School: _____

Participants' Names

Title/Position

Team members need to consider each of the following questions related to identifying potential ELs and providing language- and disability-related services. Answering these questions will help ensure students receive optimal services. If some of the questions do not apply, indicate this in the space provided.

- The Home Language Survey should also be utilized as a source of information.
- Information from this checklist will be used to develop the IEP and I-ELP.

Check that each box has been addressed by the team.

Prior to the meeting:

- ☐ Has the team gathered information from the student, parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s), school records (if applicable) language assessments, and/or special education assessments, regarding the student's previous educational experiences? If yes, which data were collected?

- ☐ Has the team reviewed the Home Language Survey to determine if a screener is needed? ☐ YES ☐ NO

- ☐ Has an interview been conducted with the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) that would produce valuable information that could assist the team in making a placement decision? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, what information was found to be useful?

Questions for the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s):

☐ What language, if any, (for example, Spanish, Chinese, English) does the student use to communicate at home?

☐ What language/communication system does the student use at home (i.e. spoken language, American Sign Language, gestures, communication device)?

☐ When using the student's communication system, can the student respond to simple commands spoken in English? ☐ YES ☐ NO In home language? ☐ YES ☐ NO

☐ What is the student's present level of performance at home as it pertains to language demands?

Does the student understand words or phrases spoken or written in English? ☐ YES ☐ NO

In home language? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Questions for the team:

☐ Would language services/supports equip the student to succeed in the classroom, school, home, or community?
☐ YES ☐ NO

Additional information if available:

☐ Have the student's parent(s), guardian(s), caregiver(s) been included in the decision-making process regarding language-related needs and the services/supports that will be provided if the student is identified as an English learner? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Additional information if available:

☐ Does the team feel that English language services are needed for this student? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Decision:

The Team has determined that the student will be identified as an EL and will receive Supplemental Title III Language Assistance services. ☐ YES ☐ NO

Signature of Parent, Guardian, or Caregiver

Date

Any student who qualifies as an EL based upon the use of the *Alternate Screening Checklist*, and does not currently have an IEP, must be evaluated for special education services.