**Massachusetts Guidance on Administering the WIDA Alternate Screener**

**What is the WIDA Alternate Screener?**

The WIDA Alternate Screener is a paper-based screening tool designed to assist schools in determining whether incoming students in grades K-12 with the [most significant cognitive disabilities](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/participation-guidelines.html) are eligible to receive English language development services. The WIDA Alternate Screener is one criterion in determining whether students qualify for the WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

**Who should the WIDA Alternate Screener be administered to?**

Students in grades K-12 with a language other than English in Section 1 of the [Language Survey](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/language-survey.docx) and who meet the criteria found in the [Participation Guidelines for WIDA Alternate ACCESS 2025–2026](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/access/participation-guidelines.html) should take the WIDA Alternate Screener to determine English learner status.

Students who do not have an IEP or 504 Plan (or arrive with medical documentation) indicating that they meet the [[criteria](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/default.html)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/default.html) for a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities will be screened with the [WIDA Screener for Kindergarten](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/screener/kindergarten) or WIDA Screener ([paper](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/screener/paper) or [online](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/screener/online)) as appropriate for their grade.

EL status of students in Pre-K is determined by administration of the [Pre-K Identification Screening Tool](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/prek-identification-screening-tool.docx).

**What other tools can help inform screening and placement decisions?**

The following WIDA documents may be useful to schools in making screening, placement, and instructional decisions. The Tell Us about Your Child Survey is an optional survey to be completed by the family of a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Data collected from the survey can help guide schools’ decisions about instructional supports and accommodations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

* [Tell Us about Your Child Survey](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/tell-us-about-your-child-survey)
* [WIDA Alternate Screener Participation Decision Tree](https://sea.wida.us/system/files/documents/Assessment/WIDAAlternateScreener-ParticipationDecisionTree.pdf)
* [Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Accessibility-Accommodations-Manual.pdf)

**Who can administer the WIDA Alternate Screener?**

Education professionals employed by the district, such as teachers, administrators, and related service providers (or paraprofessionals who are monitored by a teacher or administrator with certification in the same room), who successfully complete the WIDA Alternate Screener online training modules and pass the certification quizzes may administer the WIDA Alternate Screener. Training modules are located in the [WIDA Secure Portal](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/wida.wisc.edu/login__;!!CPANwP4y!VhIZ96Ydd3Kh1bWAHNGsgK5xbo-dMr5BYUDsqdq93K5xuap2K01YsTwnOnw3Chtwh_jXcJ-CQySU6UZDhlgWn4eUKKM$).

**What are the scores needed on the WIDA Alternate Screener to be considered non-EL?**

After administering the WIDA Alternate Screener, enter the raw scores in the [WIDA Alternate Screener Scoring Calculator](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-screener/calculator).

If a student has an overall composite score of at least Level 4 on the WIDA Alternate Screener, the student is considered a non-EL and should be coded 00 in field DOE025 in SIMS.

See Massachusetts’s [Identification and Placement Guidance](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/id-placement/MA-ID-Placement-Guidance.pdf) on the [MA state page](https://wida.wisc.edu/about/consortium/ma) of the WIDA website for more information.

**Which domains of the WIDA Alternate Screener should be administered to Kindergartners?**

Students entering the first semester of kindergarten should be administered the speaking and listening domains only. Students with a score of at least Level 4 on the oral composite will be considered non-EL.

Students in the second semester of kindergarten and above will be administered all four domains. Students with a score of at least Level 4 on the overall composite will be considered non-EL.

**What if a student’s disability precludes them from participating in all domains of the WIDA Alternate Screener?**

Please refer to the [WIDA Accessibilities and Accommodations Manual](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Accessibility-Accommodations-Manual.pdf) for available accommodations on any of the screeners. In rare instances, accommodations are not applicable and the student may not be able to participate in a particular domain of the screener. A student with a documented disability and whose IEP precludes their participation in one or more domains of the WIDA Alternate Screener must achieve a score of at least Level 4 in all other test domains in order to be coded as non-EL in SIMS.

If the student has accommodations listed in their IEP that were not provided during the screening, please refer to the [Massachusetts Language Survey Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/ma-language-survey-protocol.docx) for instructions.

**Can a previously identified English Learner student be rescreened with the WIDA Alternate Screener?**

Yes, if a student was screened with the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener and is later determined to meet the [criteria](https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/essa/default.html) for most significant cognitive disabilities, then the student can be rescreened with the WIDA Alternate Screener to determine English learner status. Likewise, if a student participated in the WIDA Alternate Screener, and it is later determined that they should have participated in the WIDA Screener or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, then the student can be rescreened with the appropriate screener.

Refer to pages 14–16 of the [Massachusetts Language Survey Protocol](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/ma-language-survey-protocol.docx) if results of the newly administered screener necessitate a change in the student’s EL status.

**What actions should school staff take if they are unsure which screener to use for a newly arrived student?**

In most cases the student should be administered the standard screener, please contact [ACCESS@mass.gov](mailto:ACCESS@mass.gov) with any questions about the WIDA Alternate Screener.