

# WIDA Alternate Screener

## Procedures and Requirements



### Assessing English Language Proficiency

Accurate identification of Multilingual Learners (MLs) helps ensure Colorado districts and schools\* provide comprehensive English Language Development (ELD) instruction that is best designed to meet the needs of its students. The WIDA Alternate Screener is designed to provide an initial measure of a student’s academic English Language Proficiency (ELP). Following [Standardized Identification Procedures](#), this assessment must only be administered to potential MLs who are enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, students identified with Intellectual Disabilities and who have the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities (MSCD) who qualify for instruction on the Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs). The purpose of the assessment is to assist educators in identifying students with a documented disability who are eligible for Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs) \*\*.

In addition, decisions about Alternate Assessment participation, including use of the WIDA Alternate Screener, must be made by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, not by an individual educator or administrator. Colorado districts and schools must follow the specific criteria outlined in this document when determining ELP levels for students who may be MLs and who already have an IEP formally identified with the MSCD from the 50 states and outlying territories.

### Participation Criteria

The WIDA Alternate Screener has limited use in Colorado. When considering WIDA Alternate Screener administration, it is important for Special Education (SpEd) and English Language Development (ELD) teams to collaboratively review the following guidelines to ensure appropriate, consistent and student-center decisions include discussions about:

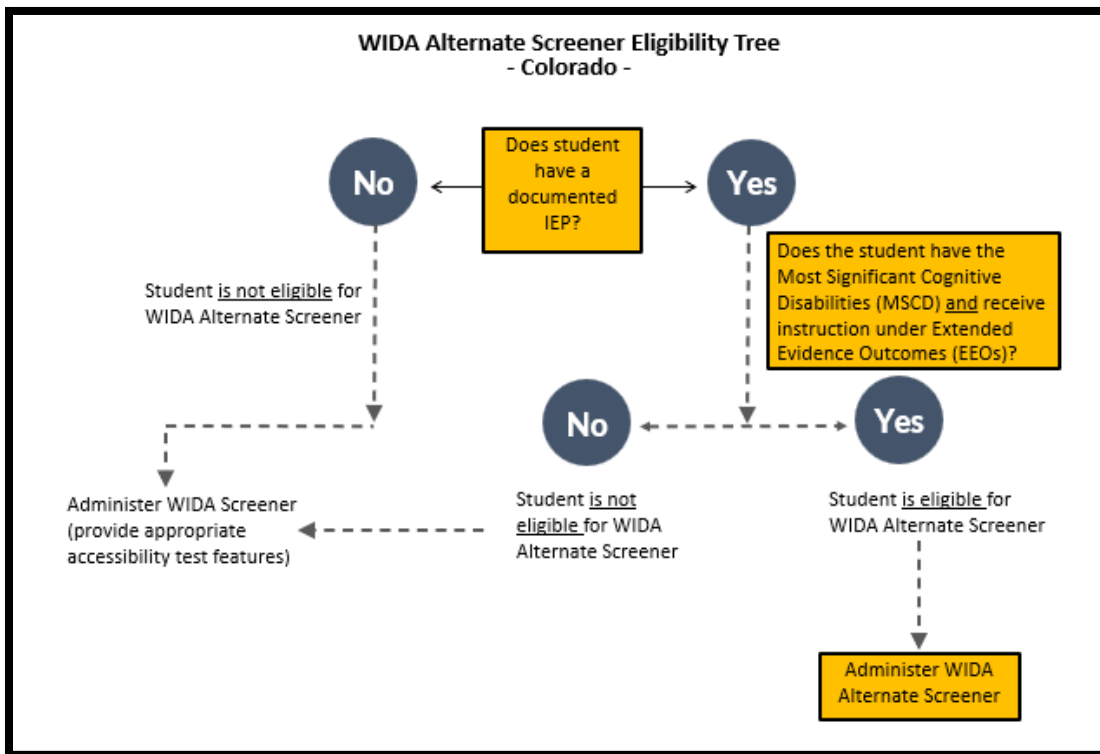
- **Alternate Assessment Identification:** Districts and schools are required to have clear procedures for identifying potential multilingual learners that assist staff and teams to determine whether the WIDA Alternate Screener is the appropriate ELP assessment. This process must also follow federal and state timelines: identification must occur within 30 days for students who enroll before the Student October Count, and within two weeks for students who enroll afterward. Importantly, ML identification must not be delayed even when a formal IEP is not yet in place, which is especially common for kindergarten students and students new to the country. These procedures ensure the K-12 students receive timely, accurate ML assessment and appropriate English language supports from the start.
- **Accessing ELD Instruction:** If the student is eligible to be screened using the WIDA Alternate Screener, it becomes the only assessment the student will need to complete to determine eligibility for ELD instruction. IEP teams may not choose to administer the WIDA Screener (Screener for Kindergarten, Online and Paper Screener for Grades 1-12) instead of the WIDA Alternate Screener once this decision has been made. Districts and schools must not administer the WIDA Alternate Screener to any student who was previously assessed using the WIDA Screener.
- **Annual Summative ELP Assessment:** Use of the WIDA Alternate Screener as an initial placement assessment does not automatically track the student into taking the WIDA Alternate ACCESS as an annual summative ELP assessment. The decision to administer the WIDA Alternate ACCESS must be an IEP team decision and must be documented in the student’s IEP.

To safeguard that appropriate and equitable Standardized Identification Procedures are followed, ELD teams will require timely support from IEP teams when enrolling students whose parents or legal guardians indicate a language other than English on the Home Language Survey (HLS). Specifically, IEP teams must determine whether the student:

1. has a current IEP from any U.S. state or [outlying territory](#), and
2. is formally identified with an Intellectual Disability and has the Most Significant Cognitive Disability (MSCD), and
3. receives instruction aligned to the Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (In Colorado: Extended Evidence Outcomes [EEOs]).

When all three participation criteria described above are verified by the IEP team, the ELD team must administer the WIDA Alternate Screener in lieu of the general WIDA Screener (Screener for Kindergarten, Online and Paper Screener for Grades 1-12). Students who are suspected of having MSCD and who may require EEO-aligned instruction are not eligible for the WIDA Alternate Screener due to a lack of empirical evidence; in such cases, the general WIDA Screener must be used to prevent misadministration of modified tools.

Once a potential ML student qualifies for ELP screening, the Eligibility Tree below is used to determine whether the WIDA Alternate Screener should be administered.



*\*In this document, the term “district and school” references any public Local Educational Agency (LEA), the State Charter School Institute, as well as, public facility, online, and charter schools (Title 22, C.R.S. 22-1-101). \*\* The Standardized Identification Procedures document outlines the ML Enrollment process which requires enrolling districts and schools to review current year ACCESS composite scores (Overall and Literacy) found in CEDAR/COGNOS ML Historical data reports prior to administering WIDA Screener. This review reduces duplicate screening and ensures accurate determination of the student’s ELP designation and appropriate data coding.*

## Assessment Scores & Body of Evidence

[Colorado's Standardized Identification Procedures](#) require an evaluation of WIDA Alternate Screener scores **and** a Body of Evidence (BOE) prior to making ML identification and ELD instruction and programming decisions. Districts and schools must develop a systematic process to collect and review student level evidence. Specifically, an accompanying rubric or other objective criteria used to evaluate assessments, classroom observations, or analysis of student work is required to determine whether potential ML students have met district and school expectations for accessing grade-level content. Examples of BOE include but are not limited to: responses provided during family interviews, student academic records, classroom observations, professional judgments from the SpEd, MTSS or other education teams, student data coding available in CEDAR/COGNOS, and/or local or district and school assessment results.

Domain scores are not considered when making eligibility determinations due to the low number of tested items in each domain. Students must try to complete all four domains.

Students who score  $\geq 3.0$  Overall Composite Score are not identified as ML, are not eligible for ELD instruction, code as Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) in Data Pipeline.

Student who score  $< 3.0$  Overall Composite Score are identified as ML, are eligible for ELD instruction, code Non English Proficient (NEP) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) according to local cut score criteria.

## Test Overview

WIDA Alternate Screener measures the student's ability to comprehend and communicate in English in the domains of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. It is a pencil-and-paper ELP assessment that is individually administered to students which provides information about initial language ability for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K–12 (this test is not intended for preschool students). This placement assessment helps educators determine whether students are, in fact, MLs. However, it must not be used to meet or substitute for the statewide WIDA ACCESS summative ELP assessment required under Title I, Title III, and ESSA. Its purpose is strictly initial identification, not to satisfy [Standardized Redesignation Procedures](#) or any criteria to exit from ML status.

This test is a flexible on-demand assessment that can be administered at any time during the school year and should take about 30 minutes to complete. There are nine tasks organized by grade cluster (K-2, 3-5, 6-12). It follows the same procedures used for the WIDA Alternate ACCESS assessment. The only significant difference is that WIDA Alternate Screener does not include the stopping criteria thus, students should complete all items at all grade levels, including kindergarten, there are no domain exemptions possible.

Test Administrator (TA) Script associated with WIDA Alternate Screener must be used during testing. It provides important instructions and reminders to follow including monitoring students' level of engagement and adjusting testing approaches to meet each student's individual needs. Test administrators should be familiar with students' needs and set a positive tone for testing and engagement.

## Scoring Student Responses

Tests are scored locally by a TA who has completed the required WIDA training modules and certification quiz. This is the only person permitted to administer and score student responses. TAs must follow the instructions in the Test Administrator Manual (TAM) to score this paper-based test (WIDA AMS will not be used) and how to enter raw scores into the [WIDA Alternate Screener Score Calculator](#) located on the main WIDA website. Student score reports must be printed

or downloaded as PDF immediately after testing since WIDA does not keep historical records of this assessment. Refer to the Secure and Save Reports section found below for more information about maintaining student privacy and storing scores reports locally. It is also important to keep in mind that WIDA alternate proficiency levels are unique and should not be compared with proficiency levels for WIDA ACCESS. Rely on the [Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) for explanations and examples of how students use their English language at each proficiency level.

## Training Requirements

TAs are required to complete the appropriate training courses prior to administering and scoring. In addition, CDE requires TAs to fully re-certify every two years. However, if there is a district or school requirement to recertify yearly, educators administering or scoring WIDA Screener assessments must comply with local policy.

Training modules can be found by logging into the [WIDA Secure Portal](#). Once logged in, select Assessment Training and launch WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring course and review the Test Administrator Manual (TAM) prior to testing. Student test booklets, the TAM and TA Scripts can all be downloaded at no cost from the WIDA Secure Portal.

### Test Administrators Must:

- Obtain a WIDA Secure Portal Account from the District Assessment Coordinator
- Read the WIDA Alternate Screener Test Administrator Manual (TAM)
- Complete Online Training Courses and adhere to state and local recertification requirements
- Pass (80%) Certification Quizzes prior to administering or scoring WIDA Alternate Screener

## Test Preparation Checklist

- Meet with a student's IEP team to determine if WIDA Alternate Screener is the appropriate assessment. Refer to the [Participation Guidelines: Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Instruction and Alternate Assessment](#).
- Complete assessment training WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring training course. Review the TA Scripts and the TAM located in the WIDA Secure Portal before testing student.
- Download and print test booklets. All test materials are located in the WIDA Secure Portal (account log in required) on the WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring Course Resources page.
- Schedule test sessions. WIDA Alternate Screener must be carefully scheduled to make sure students have enough time, space and support in place prior to testing.
- Review and prepare test materials. As needed and appropriate for the student, adapt the Student Test Booklet by cutting it apart and presenting the graphics in another format. For example, attaching them to an eye gaze board or mount them on foam core or blocks to give students a tactile method of responding. Always keep the pieces of a disassembled booklet together perhaps stored in a large envelope for future use.

## Secure & Save Reports

Student score reports are confidential, and both electronic and hard copy distributions must also comply with state and federal privacy laws, as well as local school board policies, and should readily available to share with parents or guardians. Once the WIDA Alternate Screener is completed and students are found to be multilingual learners who are eligible for ELD instruction, provide written communicate about student's proficiency level and available LIEP options to the parent or guardian in their preferred or primary language.

Districts and schools must review and comply with student data retention security and [privacy policies](#). In addition, the [School District Records Management Manual](#) in the Colorado State Archives outlines procedures to locally securely store paper test kits and records/score reports and other relevant documentation used to identify MLs. [ECEA Rules](#) and the

[Transcript and Records Checklist](#) outline how student assessment data must be provided when a student transfers or disenrolls. In particular, ELP assessment results, along with any documentation related to ML identification, should follow the student to the receiving district and school. Furthermore, annual CDE compliance audits, which include a review of ML identification documentation, also require districts and schools to retain WIDA Alternate Screener score reports in accordance with the guidance provided in the [English Language Learner Count Audit Resource Guide](#).

## Written Notification

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA Title I Section 1112(e)(3)), reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) requires districts and schools to notify parents and guardians of identified ML student in writing, in a language and format they can understand. Districts and schools may use this [sample letter](#) or compose their own letter addressing the minimum [essential elements that are required by ESEA for parent notification](#), in the case of a child with a disability, how such ELD instruction or program will meet the IEP objectives for their child. Written notification must be sent no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year (CDE defines the Student October Count date as the beginning of school year) or two weeks when student enrolls after the beginning of the school year. Upon providing parent notification and receiving consent, all identified NEP and LEP students must be enrolled in and receive adequate and appropriate ELD instruction through the identified LIEP. Moreover, dually identified (ML & SpEd) students must receive both language instruction and specially designed instruction as outlined in their IEP per state and federal regulations.

Parents or guardians have the legal right to formally opt their child out of ML programs or particular services at any time after receiving written notification in a language than can understand (ESEA 1112(e)(3)(A)(viii)). Their decision must be voluntary and based on a full understanding of the child's rights, the range of services available to their child, and the benefits of such services. Districts and schools may not recommend parents or guardians opt their child out of an LIEP or services for any reason. Moreover, formal opt-out documentation must be signed, reviewed with parents or guardians annually and kept on file locally. Districts and schools may use the [EL Tool Kit sample opt out letter](#) or compose their own letter to provide documentation for legal compliance. Opt-out students are coded with the appropriate language background, language proficiency and not enrolled in an LIEP, Parent Choice (98) following guidance found in the [Student Interchange: Student Demographic File and Definitions](#).

Similar to student who are enrolled in an LIEP, students who are not enrolled in an LIEP are also designated or coded Non English Proficient (NEP) or Limited English Proficient (LEP). Furthermore, all identified MLs (NEP and LEP) are expected to participate in WIDA ACCESS annually until summative ELP assessment scores and a collection of local academic evidence indicate they have achieved English language proficiency, meet criteria outlined in the [Standardized Redesignation Procedures](#) and now ready to transition to monitoring status as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) (ESEA Section 1111(b)(2)(G)).

When opt-out students do not demonstrate appropriate linguistic growth or maintain appropriate academic levels, districts and schools must annually inform families of student's ELP level and academic achievement and offer parents or guardians an opportunity to re-enroll their child into an LIEP or continue to decline ELD instruction or programming. They are also obligated to take affirmative steps and appropriate actions, as required by civil rights laws, Title VI and Equal Educational Opportunity Act, to ensure that students who have been formally opted out of an LIEP can meaningfully access grade-level content and educational programs. This includes periodically monitoring the student's academic progress which include but are not limited to: further assessing the student's ELP; sharing the WIDA ACCESS Individual Student Reports (ISRs) with parents or guardians before the end of the school year, and providing supports for the student's English language development, such as offering professional development in second language development to the student's core curriculum teachers.

## Cross Department Collaboration & Communication

School-based multidisciplinary teams must establish efficient procedures to communicate information outlined in this document promptly. This process could require coordinated professional learning and ongoing collaboration with ELD Directors or Coordinators and other counterparts to uphold educational equity for MLs identified with, or suspected of having, educational disabilities. The chart below can help coordinate roles and responsibilities across teams.

<b>ELD Team Responsibilities</b>  <b>Start by reviewing HLS results and initiate ML identification procedures when appropriate, then:</b>	<b>IEP Team Responsibilities</b>  <b>Start by reviewing the current IEP from any U.S. state or outlying territory, then:</b>
Request relevant special education documentation as needed prior to test administration	Provide documentation verifying Intellectual Disability eligibility, including the MSCD determination
Determine the appropriate WIDA Screener based on verified IEP information	Verify whether there is empirical evidence to confirm that the student has MSCD and receives EEO-aligned instruction
Administer the Alternate WIDA Screener only when both MSCD and EEO criteria are confirmed	Communicate eligibility status clearly and promptly to CLDE teams
Administer the general WIDA Screener when WIDA Alternate Screener 3-part eligibility criteria are not met	Clarify when a student is suspected of MSCD and therefore not eligible for WIDA Alternate Screener participation
Ensure screening is conducted according to CDE and WIDA test guidance	Collaborate with CLDE teams and participate in joint training as needed
Document ML identification outcomes and data coding decisions	Support accurate placement decisions through timely information sharing

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Who conducts ML identification and WIDA Alternate Screening?** The English Language Development (ELD) coordinator or team is responsible for conducting identification following the Standardized ML Identification procedures established by CDE. A Test Administrator (TA) who has completed the required WIDA training modules and certification quiz is the only person permitted to administer this new assessment and score student responses. Training modules are located in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#).

**What about students transitioning from preschool to kindergarten who already have IEPs?** Districts should have mechanisms in place to indicate whether students with IEPs transitioning from preschool to kindergarten are determined to have the MSCD and receive instruction aligned to the EEOs. Timely communication ensures the appropriate screener is administered during kindergarten entry for ML identification.

**What about students transferring from other states or U.S. territories when the IEP team is deliberating whether to adopt or revise the existing IEP?** Under IDEA transfer provisions, districts must provide comparable services during the school year while determining how to proceed. If the IEP team has not yet determined that the student is a child with MSCD who requires instruction aligned to the EEOs, the CLDE team should administer the appropriate general WIDA Screener (Screener for Kindergarten, Online or Paper Screener for Grades 1-12). Only students formally determined to have MSCD and EEO-aligned instruction may be administered the WIDA Alternate Screener.

**Should ELP screening wait for IEP determination?** Districts and schools should make every effort to identify students who are potential MLs as soon as possible to provide timely support for students who may be in need of English language instruction. Section 3113(b)(2) of the ESEA requires that all students who may be MLs be assessed for such status within 30 days of the start of the school year or within the first two weeks for students enrolling in a school in the State after the Student October Count. Schools must use a valid and reliable grade-appropriate assessment that measures all four language domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.