

WIDA Alternate Screener

South Carolina Guidance Document and Key Information

Effective July 1, 2025:

The WIDA Alternate Screener is approved for identifying English language proficiency (ELP) in students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who qualify for special education services and need an alternate ELP pathway.

Eligibility Criteria

To use the WIDA Alternate Screener, students must:

- Be identified with a significant cognitive disability (scores 2.5–3 SDs below mean in verbal, nonverbal, and adaptive skills).
- Participate in SC’s Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS), or:
- Have documentation of participation in a comparable alternate program from another state or country.

Use the [WIDA Alternate Screener Participation Decision Tree](#) to guide eligibility decisions.

Screening Procedures:

Students Without an IEP

Administer the standard WIDA Screener for Multilingual Learner (ML) identification.

Students in the Process of Special Education Evaluation and Eligibility

- Option 1: A student without an IEP may initially be assessed using the WIDA Screener to determine potential eligibility for ML services. If, after evaluation, the student is found eligible for special education and alternate assessment, the WIDA Alternate Screener may then be administered.
 - If the WIDA Screener was previously used, the WIDA Alternate Screener must be administered within 30 days of eligibility determination to maintain state and federal compliance.
- Option 2: To expedite evaluations, districts may submit a special request to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) using **Appendix C** from the *Review of Eligibility for WIDA*

Alternate ACCESS Participation Checklist Guidelines for Kindergarten through Second Grade Students, available on the [SCDE Alternate Assessment website](#).

Students Already Identified MLP Prior to July 1, 2025

Any student already identified for the Multilingual Learner Program (MLP), regardless of which screener was used, will continue receiving language services and remain in the program. These students have existing WIDA ACCESS or WIDA Alternate ACCESS scores that confirm their eligibility.

Assessment Participation & Attemptedness:

Due to the nature of a student's disability, accessing specific domains of any of the WIDA ELP screeners and assessments may be challenging. Therefore, WIDA has created an attemptedness criteria to assist students, which can be located in the [WIDA ACCESS District and School Test Coordinator manual](#).

Meeting the attemptedness criteria allows for an ELP score report to be generated, and the student will receive an overall ELP score.

Students taking the WIDA Alternate Screener are expected to complete all four domains - Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing - unless they are first-semester kindergarteners or have a disability that prevents participation in one or more domains.

The individual domain scores are combined to determine the student's overall English language proficiency level. For the assessment to be considered valid and reliable, the student must complete enough of each section to generate a score; this requirement is known as the "attemptedness criteria."

If a student is unable to access a domain on the WIDA Screener or WIDA Alternate Screener due to the nature of their disability, they must meet WIDA's attemptedness criteria for the assessment to be considered valid.

For WIDA Screeners and WIDA ACCESS tests, this means:

- **Listening and Reading:** The student must complete one full folder of test items (after the unscored introduction).
- **Speaking and Writing:** The student must give at least one spoken or written response.

When a student meets the attemptedness criteria for a domain, they receive the lowest possible score for that section. If this occurs across all four domains, the student is assigned a minimal overall proficiency score.

While WIDA assessments are untimed, the SCDE advises ending a test section once the student has met the minimum requirement and can no longer provide meaningful responses, as continuing may lead to frustration or disengagement.

For domains that are not administered (e.g., due to disability or for first-semester kindergarten students), and therefore not entered into the WIDA Alternate Screener Score Calculator, the score report will show “Not Tested.” Any composite score that includes an untested domain will appear grayed out and will not display a numerical score.

Visit the [WIDA Alternate Screener](#) webpage to learn more about this assessment.

Parent Notification (PN) After Alternate Reassessment

Once the WIDA Alternate Screener reassessment is complete, districts are required to communicate the student’s proficiency level and available program options to the parent or guardian and offer the option to opt out of MLP services in their preferred language.

- Form NQ (ELP ALT Reassessment) - Not Qualified
- Form C (ELP ALT Reassessment) - Identified

Reference the [Parent Notification Examples](#) to see all available PNs and a description of when to use each letter.

Key points for Staff Administering the Assessments:

- Students don’t have to finish the full domain.
- Have a process to decide when a student can't continue.
- Make sure students have full access and don’t need other accommodations before ending a test.

For **paper tests**, domains can be stopped at any time and still be scored.

For **online tests**, the testing coordinator must contact DRC to close a section and move the student to the next section (See the WIDA Screener Manual for details).

Other Requirements

- **Score Records**
- WIDA does not retain score reports. Print and store in student records.
- **IEP Notation**
 - Screening with Alternate Screener: IEP notation not required.
 - Participation in WIDA Alternate ACCESS: Must be noted in the IEP.

See the [Multilingual Learner Program Guiding Principles](#) for additional information.

For questions and support, please contact the following SCDE Staff:

- English Language Proficiency Assessments, WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Screeners, Office of Assessment and Standards: Meghan Walters-Branham (mgwalters@ed.sc.gov) / Victoria Tanaka (vttanka@ed.sc.gov)
- Assessment and Accommodations, Office of Assessment and Standards: Dann Publicover (dfpublicover@ed.sc.gov)
- Multilingual Learner Program (MLP), Office of Federal and State Accountability: TitleIII/MLP Team (TitleIII/MLP@ed.sc.gov)