



## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Provisional Identification and Placement of English Learners

**Q: "How long do districts have to rescreen and place students who were provisionally identified once schools reopen? Can districts be given until November or December to identify ELs?"**

A: At this time there is no plan to change the mandated placement timeline for newly enrolled students. School districts must provide notices within thirty days from the beginning of the school year to all parents of EL students regarding the EL student's identification and placement in a language instruction educational program. If initial identification of a student as an EL occurs during the school year, this notification must be provided to parents within the first two weeks of the student's enrollment in an ELD program<sup>1</sup>.

**Q: Is the Guidance on the Provisional Identification and Placement of English Learners for newly enrolled students to the school for next year or for this current year?**

A: The procedure described in the Guidance on the Provisional Identification and Placement of English Learners provides a means of provisionally identifying English learners (ELs) during the time that schools are closed for normal operations due to COVID-19 and face-to-face screening is not possible.

Under federal law, English learners (EL) must be identified in a timely manner using a valid and reliable English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment that measures proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing. In Missouri, we satisfy that requirement for students in first grade (second semester) through 12<sup>th</sup> grade by administering an ELP assessment called the WIDA Online Screener. This assessment provides valuable information to inform not only program placement, but also classroom-level instructional decisions.

While all possible EL students are expected to be screened for ELP using the WIDA Online Screener, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recognizes that in rare instances the assessment may place an undue hardship on students whose complete lack of English abilities prevent them from meaningfully participating in the assessment. In response to these rare instances and to ensure a smooth transition to Missouri schools, LEAs may forego ELP screening in very specific circumstances. Specific circumstances would include **true newcomer students**, defined as recently arrived immigrants, migrants or refugees in first grade (second semester) through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, who have been in the country for less than four months, and who demonstrate compelling evidence that they have never been exposed to English. These students **may be formally identified and reported as an EL using the Missouri ELD [Newcomer Kit](#) and will not be required to take the WIDA Online Screener**. All possible ELs in Kindergarten through 1<sup>st</sup> semester first grade students are expected to take the K W-APT paper screener.

<sup>1</sup> 20 U.S.C. §§ 6312(g)(1) (Title I), 7012(a) (Title III)

**Q: Should districts rescreen students who have been initially identified provisionally?**

A: Regardless of whether a student is provisionally identified as an EL or not, the formal identification process, which includes a face-to-face screening in all four domains, must be completed once school resumes. This includes all students whose home language survey indicated that there is a language other than English spoken at home, but were not provisionally identified as an EL.

**Q: How will districts send out provisional EL Parent Notifications during the period of school closure? Can districts send the Provisional Parent Notification digitally rather than by physical mail considering the health/staff challenges in sending physical letters to parents?**

A: Districts can send the Provisional Parent Notification digitally rather than by physical mail during the period of school closure.

**Q: How do the levels on the rubric relate to WIDA levels to approximate a level?**

A: Our provisional Identification and placement procedures and WIDA's remote screener are not designed to be aligned to the WIDA English language proficiency levels 1-6 and do not provide a scale score. This is one of the reasons why districts are required to identify English learners by following the full procedure described in the ELD guidance on the Initial Identification of English learners when school resumes.

**Q: How will districts make a provisional determination of EL status if parents do not want their students to complete the student interview process?**

A: If a student is unable to complete the interview process for any reason (e.g., because of a disability or refusal), then the determination of EL status must be made based on the remaining available evidence gathered from the LUS, parent interviews, and an academic records review. If reasonable evidence of English proficiency cannot be established based on those sources along with the incomplete screener results, then the student should be provisionally identified as an EL until screening can be completed.

**Q: How does this provisional placement process account for students who would score lower in some domains and higher in others?**

A: A student's language may not always fall under the same proficiency level descriptor (or column) in the rubric. Students who score low or moderate on average should be considered for provisional placement in ELD programs.

**Q: If parents submit a request for translation and interpretation with the LUS, can districts provisionally classify their student as an EL?**

A: The Provisional Identification process requires districts to attempt conducting an interview with all students whose home language survey indicates that there is a language other than English spoken at home to determine whether the student might be provisionally identified as an English learner.

**Q: Will students be identified in core data as provisional?**

A: Students should not be entered into core data as an English Learner until they are formally identified. It is recommended that districts/schools maintain a database or other internal record of students who have been provisionally screened to assist in the formal screening process once they are able to do so.

**Q. What are the required qualifications of staff assigned to implement provisional initial identification procedures?**

A: Staff assigned to implement provisional initial identification procedures should be trained in administration of the WIDA Screener and use of WIDA speaking rubric.

**Q: Should districts stop using the WIDA screener during the period of school closure?**

A: Districts will follow the guidance provided for provisional identification of ELs during the time that schools are closed for normal operations due to COVID-19 and face-to-face screening is not possible. Formal screening will take place as soon as possible once school resumes normal operations for any student who has been given a provisional status. All four domains for grades 1-12 must be completed for the student to be identified and entered into core data as an EL.

**Q: Can parents complete the Language Use Survey (LUS) on Google or other systems?**

A: Should the district have an online registration system, it is important for the district to provide instructions and access to written translations of the HLS questions in parents' preferred language, to the extent practicable. Districts should always have an optional registration process in place for parents who do not have access to the web or who need support completing the LUS. Districts must also have procedures in place to assist parents who need guidance regarding the purpose of the home language survey and how to complete it. Parents can also complete the LUS and mail it to the district.

**Q: How are we notified about students who have enrolled in our districts during this period of school closure?**

A: EL Directors should reach out to their central offices as needed to better understand their district's enrollment procedures during this period of school closure.

**Q: If the language use survey is completed digitally, what do we do about the parent's signature on the document?**

A: Districts should follow their districts' policy/guidelines regarding all other enrollment documents where a parent's signature is required during school closures.

**Q. How will districts use ACCESS results this year?**

A. WIDA ACCESS testing was completed in the timeline and under the same conditions as previous years. Testing captured student proficiency at that moment in time, the beginning of the second semester, and should be utilized in the same manner as in past years.