



# USING 2021 WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLS AND WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS FOR ELLS SCORES

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## COVID-19 Factors

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the instruction provided to students in Michigan, especially English learners (ELs). It is possible that EL linguistic development has been negatively affected due to a variety of factors brought about and exacerbated by the pandemic, including:

- Disruptions in the home as families try to manage work and life during a pandemic
- A lack of home-based resources to support English language instruction
- Families’ challenges managing remote instruction in English
- Limited interactions with native English-speaking peers, teachers and adults
- Inconsistent access to quality instruction in many remote schooling environments

## Impact to WIDA ACCESS for ELLs

Given the factors listed above we expect EL performance on the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs to be different from previous years. While individual students will be differently affected due to their unique circumstances, average performance may be lower compared to previous years. Similarly, compared to previous years, it is possible that average growth may be lower.

## Implications

Given the challenges of this year, it will be extremely difficult to isolate and evaluate specific factors behind the performance and progress of many ELs.

- Despite this, WIDA ACCESS for ELLs scores are still a valid and accurate measure of test takers’ current abilities. When the test is administered correctly, the scores continue to represent students’ ability in academic English.
- WIDA ACCESS for ELLs scores can help identify the instructional activities needed to help students grow in their English language proficiency. WIDA ACCESS for ELLs scores remain critical in helping students, parents and educators understand where students are at the time they test. These valid scores for individual students can still aid educators in making instructional decisions for the 2021-22 school year.

Let’s look at an example. The table shows a fictitious student’s WIDA ACCESS for ELLs proficiency scores for the past three years:

Year	Composite	Comprehension	Oral	Literacy	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
2019	3.0	3.1	1.9	2.7	3.3	1.4	3.0	2.3
2020	3.9	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.7	3.1
2021	3.3	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.9	1.8	3.1	2.8

In general, what this data tells you about the student is that their English language development skills may not have progressed in any area during the 2020-21 school year. A closer examination of the student’s Scale Scores in each domain would provide even more information about the student’s growth.

Year	Composite	Comprehension	Oral	Literacy	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
2019	345	369	299	339	362	214	372	299
2020	387	381	361	365	358	359	391	332
2021	370	373	350	359	362	285	385	332

The shaded areas on the table indicate where the student had growth. As you look closer at their scores from the 2021 WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and compare them to the 2020 scores, you can see more clearly where the student was unable to make gains.

Educators would be able to use this information to make instructional program decisions for the student and the school may choose to focus on providing targeted language opportunities for this student. The same tactic can be used to examine student’s Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores as well. Educators are strongly cautioned to not make comparisons across districts or even between a district’s scores and state averages. Comparisons between building level aggregate scores within the same district may also be difficult to do given the varying participation rates and contexts of instruction during the years impacted by COVID-19.

## Proficiency Levels and Scale Scores

If used appropriately, WIDA proficiency levels and scale scores can help educators make comparisons about student performance across domains, across grades, and even across students. WIDA’s Interpretive Guide for Score Reports provides teacher friendly information to help educators understand the best uses for this data.

- [WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access/scores-reports) (https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access/scores-reports)
- [WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide](https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access/scores-reports) (https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access/scores-reports)

