

**2025-2026**

**Michigan Department of Education  
WIDA Alternate Screener Guidance**

Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability  
Michigan Department of Education



Second Revision March 2026

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Below is a quick table to help direct your questions appropriately so that you can get answers efficiently, but when in doubt, make the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) your first choice when calling with assessment-related questions.

### Call Center

**1-877-560-8378 or 517-241-4102**

#### Questions pertaining to the following:

- **Option 1:** For inquiries related to state assessment policy; the OEAA Secure Site; administration of the M-STEP, MI-Access, Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments; and Accountability Reporting
- **Option 2:** For inquiries related to the SAT, PSAT, or WIN Work Readiness Assessments testing:
  - **Option 1:** eligibility to test and the OEAA Secure Site
  - **Option 2:** administration of the College Board assessments (PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, SAT)
  - **Option 3:** administration of the WIN Work Readiness Assessments
- **Option 3:** For inquiries related to WIDA, the English Learner assessment
- **Option 4:** For all other calls
- **Option 5:** To report known unethical testing practices by a school on any state assessment
- **Option 6:** To repeat these options

### Office of Educational Supports (OES)

**517-241-6974**

#### Questions pertaining to the following:

1. Entrance & Exit Protocol
2. Title III funding
3. Title III compliance and monitoring
4. WIDA standards professional development activities sponsored by OES

### Client Services Center (WIDA Consortium)

**1-866-276-7735**

#### Questions pertaining to the following:

1. General WIDA information about standards and assessments
2. How to navigate the WIDA Secure Portal for training, materials, etc.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The WIDA Consortium released the [WIDA Alternate Screener](#) to complement the WIDA Screener and WIDA Kindergarten Screener as the placement assessments used to determine English Language Proficiency (ELP) and establish eligibility for English Language Development (ELD) services in Michigan. Intended to screen potential English Learners (ELs) who have the most significant cognitive disabilities for ELD services, the WIDA Alternate Screener is available in Michigan using the guidance outlined below.

## **USING THE WIDA ALTERNATE SCREENER**

The WIDA Alternate Screener has limited use in Michigan. To be eligible to take the WIDA Alternate Screener, students must have an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) and will (or most likely will) participate in the alternate content area assessments (MI-Access: Functional Independence, Supported Independence, and Participation) before a district can use the WIDA Alternate Screener as the student's ELP screening tool. The screener does not determine which summative ELP assessment (WIDA Kindergarten ACCESS, WIDA ACCESS, or WIDA Alternate ACCESS) should be given to students.

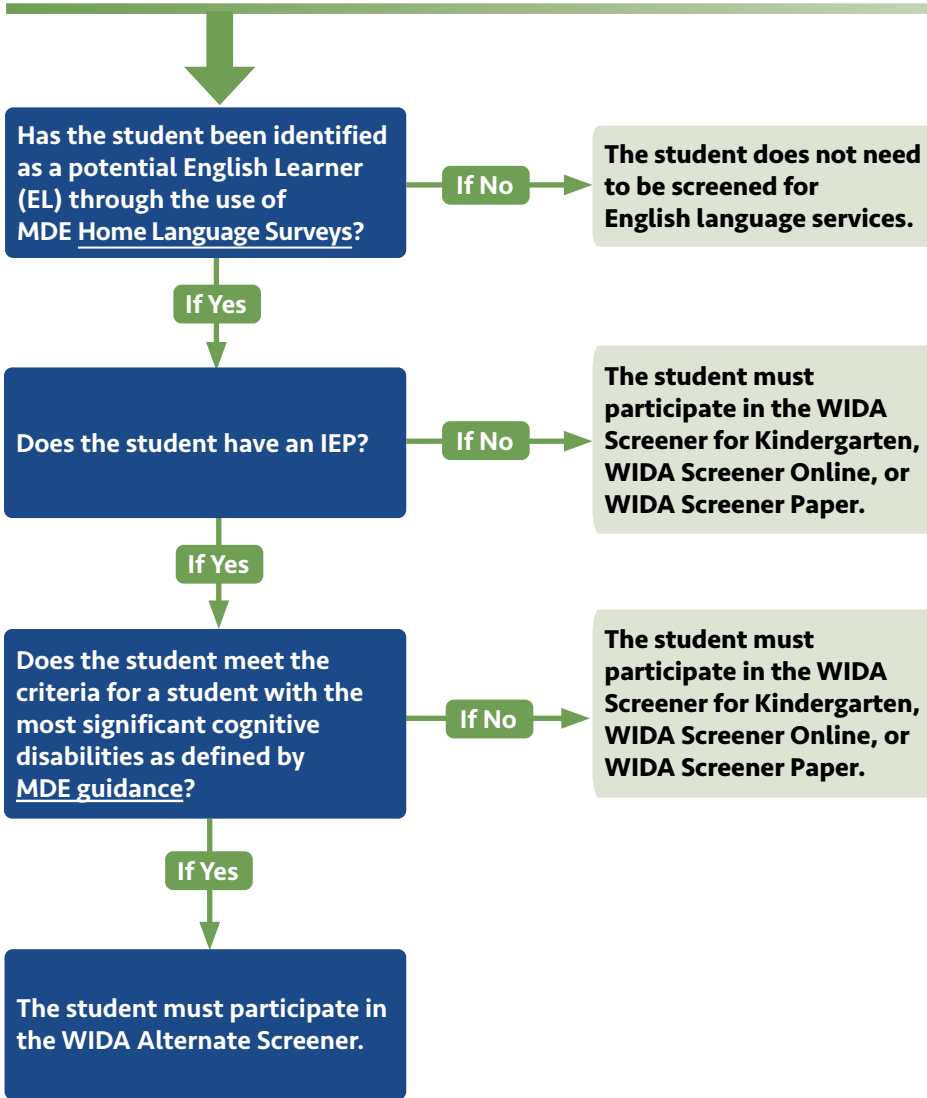
## **WIDA ALTERNATE SCREENER ELIGIBILITY MICHIGAN MODEL**

A student qualifies for ELD screening upon enrollment when the [Home Language Survey \(HLS\)](#) indicates a language other than English.

Once a student qualifies for ELD screening, the following eligibility tree indicates when the WIDA Alternate Screener should be administered instead of the WIDA Screener.



## WIDA ALTERNATE SCREENER DECISION TREE



Students with disabilities who do not meet the criteria for a significant cognitive disability should be administered the general WIDA Screener with appropriate accommodations. The [WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#) on the WIDA website provides information about appropriate accommodations.

## ADMINISTRATION

- **Test Structure:** Echoing the WIDA Alternate ACCESS, the WIDA Alternate Screener is a nine-item, four-domain assessment (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing) available in the following grade-level clusters: K-2, 3-5, and 6-12. The test must be administered individually. The test takes approximately 30 minutes to administer, depending on the student’s needs and accommodations included in their IEP.
- **On-Grade Level Testing:** Unlike the WIDA Screener, students taking the WIDA Alternate Screener must be tested on-grade level at all times of the year. Because of this, there are not multiple test cycles (i.e. Cycle I, Cycle II, Kindergarten Roundup Cycle).
- **Test Window:** The WIDA Alternate Screener should be administered at any time during the school year when new students enroll and it is determined that they should take the WIDA Alternate Screener. Districts have 30 days to identify students as EL from the date of enrollment at the beginning of the school year and 10 days to identify students as EL at any other time of the school year.
- **Training:** Test administrators must successfully complete the WIDA Alternate Screener training in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#) before administering the assessment. Training must be completed on an annual basis because this assessment is scored by local test administrators.
- **Timing:** While WIDA assessments are untimed, the OEAA 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.
- **Materials:** The WIDA Alternate Screener assessment materials are available for user download in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#).
- **Scoring and Domains:** All four domains must be administered to all grade levels, including kindergarten, and there are no domain exemptions possible. The WIDA Alternate Screener does not have universal “stop rules” that automatically end the test for all students.
- **Score Report:** Because the WIDA Alternate Screener is a paper assessment, the test administrator will score the completed assessment and enter scores into the [OEAA Secure Site](#). The OEAA Secure Site functions as the online WIDA calculator to produce a score report.
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices:** Students who use AAC devices may be able to do so on the WIDA Alternate Screener. Please follow the guidelines for using AAC devices in the [WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#).
- **Scribe:** Students who use eye-gaze or other forms of gesture may be able to do so on the WIDA Alternate Screener. Please follow the scribing guidelines in the [WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#).



## SPECIAL NOTES

**Contact MDE:** Prior to screening any student for the 2026-27 school year with the WIDA Alternate Screener, please send an e-mail to [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov) with the following information:

- District Name
- Number of students to be screened
- Identification of each student’s primary disability

MDE will then contact the district to verify that the correct screener is being used, verify that training has been completed in the WIDA Secure Portal, and follow-up with the district post-screening to discuss issues/additional information that may be needed to enhance future MDE guidance.

**Screening Frequency:** Students should only be screened one time.

**Screener Selection:** Students should not be assessed using both the general WIDA Screener and the WIDA Alternate Screener. Use the [WIDA Alternate Screener Decision Tree on page 5](#) to choose the proper screener to administer.

**Kindergarten Screening:** Kindergarten students must be assessed on all four domains at all times of year. This differs from the current policy on screening Kindergarten students. WIDA does not have evidence to support using WIDA Alternate Screener as a two-domain assessment.

**Domain Exemptions:** There are no domain exemptions from the WIDA Alternate Screener. In cases where a student does not provide a response or is unable to produce a response, educators must follow WIDA’s scoring guidelines.

**Braille:** There is no braille form of the WIDA Alternate Screener.

**Newcomers without IEPs:** Students often arrive in Michigan schools without IEPs, and educators and students are moving through the very long process of evaluations, meetings, etc. Even if students are on track to receive an IEP, the student is not eligible to take the WIDA Alternate Screener unless having a formal IEP.

**IEPs that are Revoked:** If after a student has been screened with the WIDA Alternate Screener, the special education designation is revoked at a later date, the student should not be rescreened. Educators should keep in mind that a student’s summative WIDA assessment can change from year to year. Depending on a student’s status as a student with disabilities, their primary disability type, and other factors, a student can be assigned to the WIDA ACCESS or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS from year to year.

**Attemptedness Criteria:** If a student response or non-response is recorded for one scored item then the student meets the attemptedness criteria. When a student meets the attemptedness criteria for a domain, they receive the lowest possible minimal score for that section. If this occurs across all four domains, the student is assigned a minimal overall score.



## REPORTING

LEAs will report the WIDA Alternate Screener scores in the [OEAA Secure Site](#) and ensure that the student is identified as an EL in their student information system and the [Michigan Student Data System \(MSDS\)](#). Downloadable reports will also be available in the OEAA Secure Site after scores are entered.

## SCORES AND PROFICIENCY

The WIDA Alternate Screener uses the same scale as the WIDA Alternate ACCESS. Students can score a 5, 4, 3, or <3 on each domain and composite score. Students scoring a 3 or below should be identified as EL.

Additional information about the WIDA Alternate Screener scores can be found in the [WIDA Screener Interpretive Guide for Score Reports](#).

## QUESTIONS

For questions about the WIDA Alternate Screener, please send an e-mail to [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov) or call 877-560-8378.





Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA)

Phone: 1-877-560-8378

Website: [www.michigan.gov/oeaa](http://www.michigan.gov/oeaa)

Email: [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov)

Check the MDE website frequently during the 2025-26 school year for updated materials.