

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

Effective May 1, 2021

Introduction

On March 30, 2021, WIDA released their new WIDA Screener for Kindergarten. This tool will eventually replace the K W-APT, which WIDA plans to sunset in the coming years.

The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is an engaging safari themed assessment designed to get students moving and responding to questions about the animals in the story. It is designed to solicit authentic responses from students to allow them to show what they know and can do in English.

Unlike the W-APT assessments, the WIDA screeners produce scores on the ACCESS for ELLs scale from 1.0 to 6.0, in half increments. This means that they are closely aligned with the ACCESS for ELLs, and can be predictive of the score that students would later receive on that assessment.

Like the K W-APT, training for the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten along with the assessment itself is available in the WIDA Secure Portal. Staff planning to administer the assessment must refresh their training annually. Training for Writing and Speaking scoring only needs to occur once a year, if staff will also be administering a paper version of the ACCESS for ELLs assessment.

The K W-APT scoring is on a different scale than the new screener, and has four proficiency levels compared to six (with half units) on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten. Between a different underlying scale and structurally different assessment, there is no functional linkage between the scoring on the two assessments.

The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten can assess four domains, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. These are combined to produce composite scores, such as Oral (Listening and Speaking), Literacy (Reading and Writing) and an Overall Composite, which consists of all four domains.

After working with WIDA we have set preliminary proficiency targets for the Oral Composite and Overall Composite on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten. Over the next year or two we will assess whether or not these are performing as expected, and will update this document if necessary. Please feel free to reach out to DPI staff as you use this new assessment, and share your experiences and any concerns about these proficiency targets.

First Semester Kindergarten

During the development of the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA field tested the instrument in summer for incoming Kindergartners, and during the spring for second-semester Kindergartners. Administering this assessment to incoming Kindergartners earlier than mid-summer will reduce the accuracy of the assessment. It is recommended that you administer it as close to the start of school as possible.

If the screener must be administered in the spring of 4K due to logistical reasons, the later in the spring it is administered, the better. Administering the assessment prior to April will likely result in moderately unreliable data. Students who appear borderline proficient on screeners administered prior to July should be re-screened in fall, as their language skills may have changed enough over the summer to change their EL classification.

Students enrolling into first-semester Kindergarten tend to be pre-literate, and WIDA recommends administering the Oral components only at this stage in a student’s linguistic development. Only a very small percent of students at this age were able to demonstrate proficiency based on the Overall Composite in field tests.

As the Oral Composite only measures half of the domains while the Overall Composite measures all four, the two scores can’t be used interchangeably. A student’s Oral ability at this age is not a robust predictor of their future Literacy ability, although an Oral proficiency score below 6.0 indicates that a student will most likely not be English proficient when assessed in the future on all four domains.

The following table summarizes criteria for English proficiency, taking into account the time of year that the screener was administered:

Oral Composite	English Proficient?
1.0-4.5	No
5.0-5.5 (Before July 1)	No, but screener should be readministered in the fall
5.0-5.5 (After July 1)	Borderline; EL unless demonstrating proficiency on MIP
6.0	Yes

Second Semester K concern for Proficient student

As the Oral Composite is a subset of the Overall Composite, some students deemed proficient during Oral screening during entry into first semester Kindergarten may show indications of a lack of overall proficiency once they begin to develop their Literacy skills.

If there are significant concerns about a student deemed proficient on the Oral component, it is appropriate to administer the full WIDA Screener for Kindergarten during the second semester of Kindergarten. As the student’s Oral ability likely has changed over this time period as well, a full administration is more appropriate than just assessing the Literacy components to add to the prior Oral components.

Note that this rescreening will likely occur after the annual ACCESS for ELLs assessment has been completed, as it is usually administered at the end of the first semester. If the full screener identifies the student as an EL, their first administration of ACCESS will be during the 1st grade.

To determine whether or not a student is proficient based on the full screener, please consult the table below.

2nd Semester Kindergarten and 1st Semester First Grade

Once students reach 2nd semester Kindergarten they should have the Literacy skills to be assessed using the Overall Composite. This provides a much more robust measure of a student’s English proficiency. Please note that our Overall Composite criteria for Borderline Proficient/Proficient matches the ACCESS for ELLs, although slightly modified due to the reporting of scores in units of half proficiency levels, rather than the tenths that ACCESS reports in.

Overall Composite	English Proficient?
1.0-4.0	No
4.5	Borderline; EL unless demonstrating proficiency on MIP
5.0-6.0	Yes

Training for Screeners

WIDA develops and produces various ELP assessments and provides the training for administering those assessments. WIDA also performs psychometric evaluations of the assessments to ensure their reliability and validity. These psychometric evaluations are dependent on the training, and administration by untrained staff may result in an invalid or unreliable assessment of a student’s English proficiency. As we’re required to use valid and reliable

ELP assessments,¹ districts must ensure that staff are appropriately trained to administer WIDA's ELP assessments.

All staff who administer the screener must complete the appropriate WIDA trainings and pass the certification test(s) at least once annually. Training is available on the WIDA.us website and is very similar to the ACCESS for ELLs trainings. Only educators currently licensed in Wisconsin may score a screener.

It is highly recommended that staff with an ESL certification or other background in language development administer the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, as scoring it requires a fundamental knowledge in language acquisition and use of productive language.

¹ [Rios v. Read, 480 F. Supp. 14, 19-20, 23](#) and [34 CFR § 200.6 \(h\) \(1\)](#)