

Identification and Screening of Potential English Learners 201: Identification and Screening Scenarios

Multilingual/Language Development
Department

Federal Legislation and Landmark Cases

Federal Requirements

Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964

- Prohibits denial of equal access to education because of language minority students' limited proficiency in English.

Title VII of the ESEA of 1968: The Bilingual Education Act

- The first federal legislation to recognize the unique needs of English learners and the need for specialized instruction. It established federal funding for the training of bilingual teachers and bilingual programs.

Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974

- Defines denial of equal educational opportunity as “failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students in an instructional program.”

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975

- Provides for free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation.
- Ensures special education and related services to those children

English learners (ELs) must be able to participate effectively in all programs and content areas.

Landmark Cases

Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (U.S. Supreme Court, 1974)

- Districts must take affirmative steps to overcome educational barriers faced by the non-English speaking students in a district.

Castañeda v. Pickard (648 F.2d 989, U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit, 1981)

- Program for ELs should be:
 - **Theory:** Based on “a sound educational theory”;
 - **Practice:** “Reasonably calculated to implement effectively the educational theory adopted by the school,” with adequate resources and personnel; and
 - **Results:** Evaluated as effective in overcoming language barriers after a trial period.

Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202, 102 S. Ct. 2382, 72 L. Ed. 2d 786 (1982)

- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that undocumented children have the same right as U.S. citizens and permanent residents to receive a free public education.

Legislative Update for TBE Programs

Revised: Illinois School Code (105 ILCS5/14C-3)

"Every school-age English learner, not enrolled in existing private school systems, shall be enrolled and participate in the Transitional Bilingual Education program established by the school district in which they reside, according to the classification to which they belong. They shall remain in the program until they have developed sufficient English language skills to succeed in classes conducted entirely in English. An annual examination in oral language (listening and speaking), reading, and writing, as prescribed by the State Board, will be administered to all English learners participating in the TBE program. No school district shall transfer an English learner out of the TBE program unless the student has achieved a score on this examination that, in the State Board's determination, reflects a level of English proficiency appropriate to their grade level."

Amended to remove the obligation to obtain parental permission for students to continue receiving EL services beyond three years, effective Jan. 1, 2026

Key Changes for Districts on Jan. 1, 2026

More Flexibility for ELs: No more parental permission required to continue services beyond three years.

Streamlined Enrollment/Placement Procedures: No need for separate letters to notify parents of enrollment/placement for students in one to three years of service versus beyond three years.

Streamlined Exit Procedures: No need for separate reclassification letters for students who've achieved proficiency prior to receiving three years of service versus after three years of service.

Ongoing Support for ELs: ELs get the support they need for as long as they need it. Students remain in the EL program until they have reached proficiency on the annual WIDA ACCESS assessment and developed enough English skills to succeed in English-only classrooms.

Transition Period and Implementation

- Districts will have a full school year (2025-2026) to adjust their local procedures and documentation practices.
- The updated requirements will take effect in the 2026-2027 school year.
- Enrollment/placement and reclassification letters on ISBE website will be updated and available for use on Jan. 1, 2026



Agenda

- Identification Basics
- Accurate Administration and Interpretation of the Home Language Survey (HLS)
- Effective Administration of the HLS
- Screening Potential English Learners
- Screening Exemptions
- Scenarios
- Resources

Objectives

- Participants, depending on background, will be introduced or reminded of basic procedures in identification of potential English learners.
- Participants will use policy guidance to identify potential English learners.
- Educators will apply basic procedures to selected identification scenarios and work toward an outcome.

Accurate Administration and Interpretation of the Home Language Survey

Home Language Survey in Illinois

The state **requires** the district to collect a Home Language Survey for **every** new student.

- This information is used to indicate if the family and/or the student speak a language other than English at home. In turn, this helps to identify the students who need to be assessed for English language proficiency and may qualify for language services.

[Home Language Surveys](#)

Home Language Survey

The state requires the district to collect a Home Language Survey for every new student. This information is used to count the students whose families speak a language other than English at home. It also helps to identify the students who need to be assessed for English language proficiency.

Please answer the questions below and return this survey to your child's school.

Student's Name: _____

1. Is a language other than English spoken in your home?

Yes _____ No _____

Which language? _____

2. Does your child speak a language other than English?

Yes _____ No _____

Which language? _____

If the answer to either question is yes, the law requires the school to assess your child's English language proficiency.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Effective Administration of the Home Language Survey

Step 1

The HLS is completed by the parent/guardian of the student in a language they understand. It is signed and dated.

Step 2

District reviews the responses on the HLS

Step 3

Look in the student's file and/or in SIS to see if the student has been previously screened/tested or has an EL record.

Step 4

District determines next steps based on the following:

- HLS responses
- SIS history
- Initial HLS responses
- Statewide assessments

Home Language Survey Process

Home Language Survey Process

Answer to one or both questions on the HLS is YES and lists a language other than English. Student is a potential EL.

Look in the student's file and/or in SIS to see if the student has been previously screened/tested with WIDA Screener/ACCESS or has an EL record.

If the student is already identified as EL (excluding kindergarten) or has screening/ACCESS scores within the last school year, do not screen.

If the student is not already identified as EL or is entering Kindergarten, screen the student. Unless the ELP screening exemption applies (see [screening exemptions](#))

Home Language Survey Process

If the answer to both questions on the HLS is NO and a language other than English is not listed. Student may still be a potential EL.

Look in the student's file and/or in SIS to see if the student has been previously screened/tested with WIDA Screener/ACCESS or has an EL record.

If the original HLS has a language other than English and there are no WIDA Screener/ACCESS scores within the last year, screen the student.

If the HLS is the original or matches the original, do not screen the student.

Screening Potential English Learners

K-12 English Proficiency Screening

Grade	Required Screening	Domains Included	Minimum Score for English Proficiency
Kindergarten semester 1	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	• Listening • Speaking	5.0 oral composite
Kindergarten semester 2; Grade 1 semester 1	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	• Listening • Speaking • Reading • Writing	5.0 overall composite
Grade 1 semester 2 – 12th grade	WIDA Screener	• Listening • Speaking • Reading • Writing	

Screening must take place within 30 days of student enrollment in the district.

(IL Admin Code 228.15(e))

Screening Exemptions

Screeners and ELP Elements in IWAS -- SIS

The screenshot displays the SIS interface with a sidebar on the left and a main content area. The sidebar includes a search bar and a list of navigation options: Home, Student, Search, Request New SID, Multiple SID Merge, Reverse Merge, Exit Enrollment, Assessment, Adjusted Cohort, Teacher, Early Childhood Transition, Prenatal, Reports, Batch File Processing, District Data Verification, Seal of Biliteracy Application, and Internal. The main content area has a top navigation bar with tabs: Demographic, Enrollments, Program Indicators, EL Information, and Services. The 'Demographic' tab is active, showing student information for a student with SID: [redacted]. The student's legal name is Mohammed, and their gender is Male. The 'EL Screener' section is highlighted with a red box, showing a 'View Details' link. Other sections include Date of Birth, Race/Ethnicity (White), Birth Place Name (Brooklyn NY), Student Lineage (Jr, II), Mother's Maiden Name, Student Address, and Seal of Biliteracy Awards. An 'Edit' button is located at the bottom right of the form.

SID: [redacted]		Legal First Name: Mohammed		Legal Middle Name:	
Date of Birth		Gender	Male		
Race/Ethnicity	White	Student Lineage (Jr, II)			
Birth Place Name	Brooklyn NY	Mother's Maiden Name			
EL Screener	View Details	Student Address	View Details		
Seal of Biliteracy Awards		Gifted and Accelerated	View Details		

[Edit](#)

Screeners and ELP Elements in IWAS -- SIS

Demographic Enrollments Program Indicators EL Information

SID: 123456789
 Legal Last Name: abmrxyzDELY Legal First Name: NameELtoDL Legal Middle Name:

Date of Birth: 09/26/2011 Gender: Male
 Race/Ethnicity: Two or More Races Student Lineage (Jr, II)
 Birth Place Name: Mother's Maiden Name
 EL Screener: View Details Student Address: View Details
 Seal of Biliteracy Awards: Gifted and Accelerated: View Details

Edit

EL Screener Data

SID: 123546789
 Legal Last Name: abmrxyzDELY Legal First Name: NameELtoDL Date Of Birth: 09/26/2011 Home RCDTS: 123546789012345

EL Screener record updated successfully

Screener Test	Other State Assessment Results	Tested Home RCDTS	123456789012345
Test Date	09/26/2014	Grade Tested	3 - Grade 3
Semester	Semester 1		
	Listening	Speaking	Reading
	Writing	Composite Literacy	Composite Oral
Raw Score / Level			NA
Proficiency Level	1.0	2.5	3.0
			1.0
Overall			2.0

Was the student determined EL? No

Add New Edit

ELP Screening Exceptions

ACCESS for ELLs results for the previous school year are available.

Screening results from within the last 12 months are available.

Exceptions

Student previously demonstrated proficiency on screener or ACCESS for ELLs.

Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1) (C) -- next slide

ELP Screening Exception: Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1) (C)

All
criteria
must
be TRUE

For students
eligible to
participate in
statewide
assessments

- Resides in home where a language other than English is spoken, **AND**
- The student was not identified as an English learner in the previous district, **AND**
- The student did not receive EL services in the last school year, **AND**
- The student has met state standards in reading and math on the most recent state assessment or on a nationally normed assessment.

ACCESS Exit Criteria for Reclassification

- WIDA Access– Minimum composite proficiency score for reclassification is 4.8.
- Student’s EL information will be automatically updated in the Student Information System to last one year.
- Student will be a “Former EL” in SIS report.

Note: Local districts must update their student management platform to reflect the student is no longer EL. If not, student could roll back into EL the next year because the EL indicator was not switched to EL=NO.

Screeners and ELP Elements in IWAS -- SIS

Student Assessment Data and Scores Report

Student ID:

School Year: 2020

English Learners

Grade Level:	9	Content Area Tutoring:	
Date First Enrolled in District/LEA:	02/24/2020	Developmental Bilingual Education:	
New Arrival to U.S.:	N	Dual Language & Two Way Immersion:	
EL Placement - Entry Status:	13	Heritage Language:	
Native Language Code:	001	Sheltered English Instruction:	
Race Code:	11	Transitional Bilingual:	
Migrant Indicator:	N	Content Based ESL:	
Special Education IEP Indicator:	Y	Structured English Immersion or SDAIE:	
Date Enrolled or Re-entered to Receive EL Services:	02/24/2020	Pull-Out ESL:	
Class Periods Provided Per Week:	02	Inclusionary Support:	
Title III Status:		Pull-Out for Individual Support:	
Immigrant Education Program:		Self-Contained:	
504 Accommodation Indicator:			

ACCESS Testing

Tier:	C	Listening Proficiency Level:	3.9
Listening Scale Score:	382	Speaking Proficiency Level:	3.5
Speaking Scale Score:	362	Reading Proficiency Level:	2.9
Reading Scale Score:	369	Writing Proficiency Level:	3.4
Writing Scale Score:	346	Comprehension Proficiency Level:	3.3
Comprehensive (Overall) Scale Score:	373	Oral Proficiency Level:	3.7
Oral Scale Score:	372	Literacy Proficiency Level:	3.3
Literacy Scale Score:	358	Composite (Overall) Proficiency Level:	3.4
Composite Scale Score:	362		

Scenarios

Scenario 1 - Manuel

- Manuel, a newcomer from Guatemala, has moved into your district.
- The student has been out of school for six months and is 7 years old.
- Parents answer the HLS with Yes-Yes.
- Student has no previous records available.

What are the next steps?

Scenario 1 – Outcome

- Student should be placed appropriately based on age/grades completed after conversation with parents and screening.
- The district will screen the student.
- Depending on the screener result, the student may be eligible for EL services in Illinois.

Scenario 2 – Val

- Val is a new student to the district and is 5 years old.
- Student registered in November.
- The student has never attended school prior to kindergarten.
- The parents answer Yes-No on the HLS.

What are your next steps?

Scenario 2 - Outcome

- Student will be screened for eligibility of services.
 - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten -- Speaking and Listening domains only.
- Depending on the screener result, the student may be eligible for EL services in Illinois.

Scenario 3 – Nathaniel

- Nathaniel, Grade 5, transfers to your district from another Illinois school district.
- The HLS is marked differently than what is listed in the Student Information System.
- Cumulative (temporary) file from previous school district just arrived.

What are your next steps?

Scenario 3 - Outcome

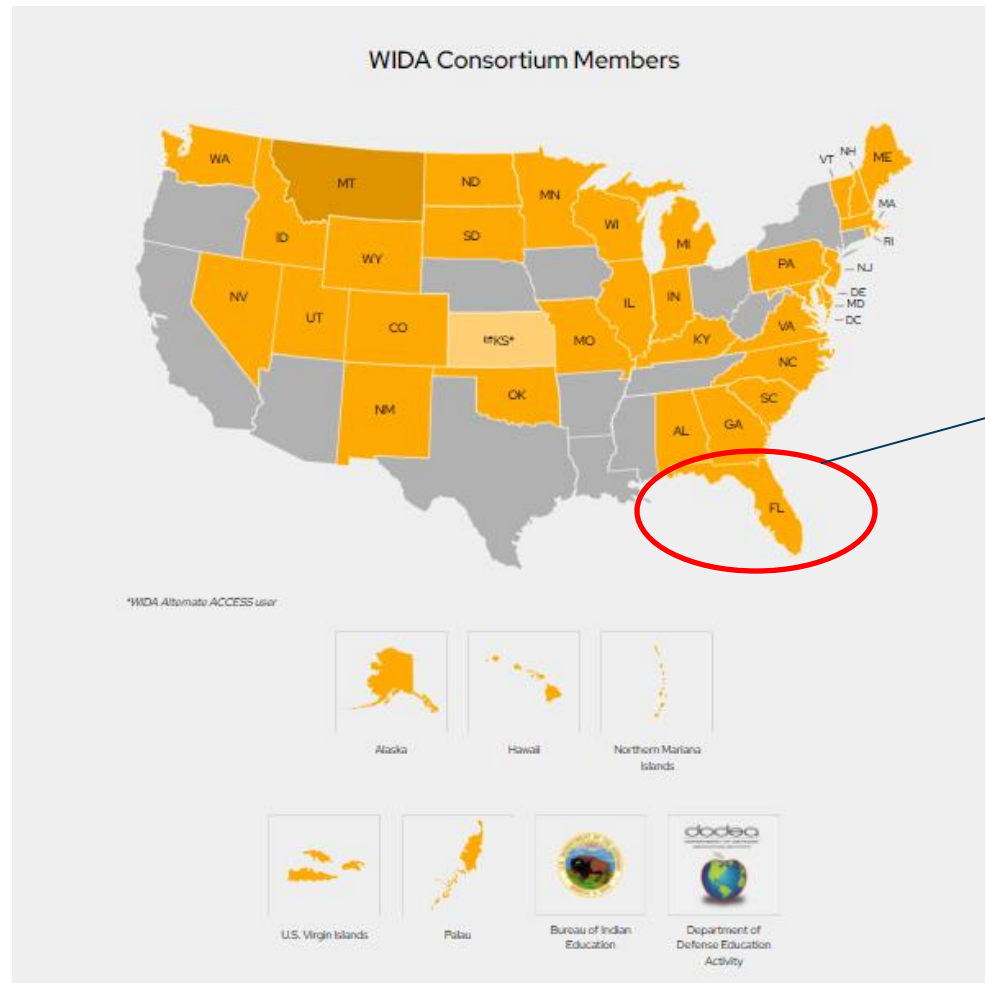
- Check student cumulative (temporary) file for the original HLS to ensure it matches the original HLS.
- Check student record in the Student Information System for anything related to EL.
 - Check the SIS data to see if the student has reclassified.
 - If they are still currently an EL student, you will place them into programming.
 - If they have reclassified with ACCESS, you will not screen.
 - If they have not been EL and have not reclassified, you will need to screen the student.
 - Since this student is in 5th grade, the exemption could apply.
 - If the criteria applies, the student will not be screened.

Scenario 4 – Phoebe

- Phoebe enrolls in kindergarten in the district coming from Florida in December.
- The student's parents complete the HLS Yes-Yes.
- Luckily, the district received the student's cumulative file. The Florida district screened the student in August. She scored a 4.5 overall oral proficiency.
- She was found not eligible for services in her previous district.

What would be the next steps?

41 WIDA Member States, Three Territories, and Two Federal Agencies



Florida, a WIDA state, has [screener](#) [proficiency](#) criteria at 4.0 or higher in Listening and 4.0 in Speaking.

Scenario 4 - Outcome

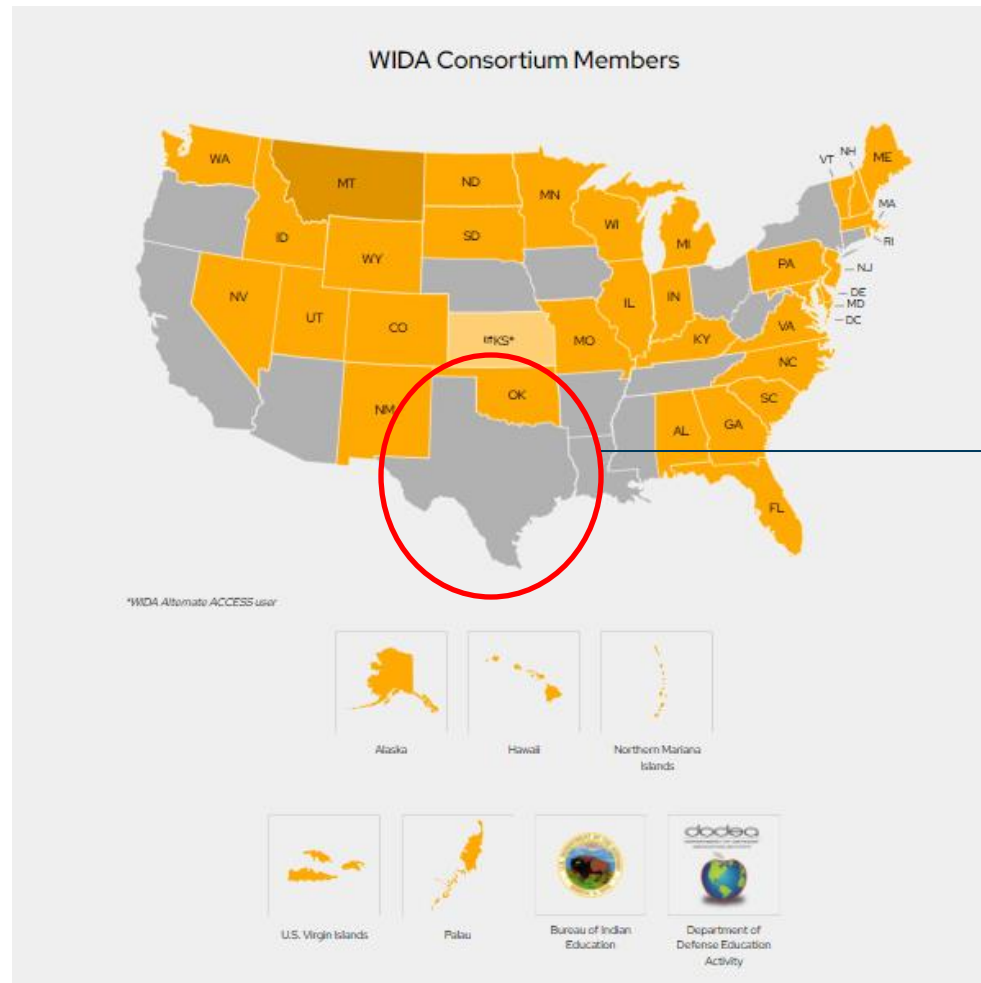
- The student is from a WIDA state. We observe the screener and ACCESS assessment Florida uses.
- Illinois has a minimum criteria of 5.0 for oral language proficiency. The student's screener score is 4.5 overall.
- The student was screened or had an ACCESS result that was less than 12 months ago.
- NO screening necessary.
- Phoebe is eligible for EL services in Illinois.
- Mark Phoebe EL "Yes" in your local management system.

Scenario 5 – Filip

- Filip enrolls in Grade 10 in the district from Texas, where he has lived since he entered school.
- The student's parents completed the HLS as Yes-Yes.
- The district contacts the Texas district after waiting for records for some time. The Texas district sends digital records that include TELPAS results that the student achieved proficiency in 5th grade in his previous district.
- On his last Texas state academic assessment, the student met proficiency in math but did not meet academic proficiency in reading.

What are the next steps?

41 WIDA Member States, Three Territories, and Two Federal Agencies



Texas is a non-WIDA state. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) is not recognized in Illinois.

Scenario 5 - Outcome

- Filip is from a non - WIDA state. Illinois does not recognize a state that does not use WIDA screeners and ACCESS assessment.
- The results from the TELPAS can be used for background knowledge of the student.
- The district will screen the student.
- Depending on the screener result, Filip may be eligible for EL services in Illinois.

Scenario 6 – Mayte

- Mayte enrolls in Grade 2 in the district from a nearby Illinois district.
- The student's parents have completed the HLS with a No-No.
- The district checks the student's cumulative folder and SIS to discover that the student is an EL and has an EL record of receiving services in the previous school.
- The student has a Kindergarten ACCESS result (2.8 overall), which indicates that she continues to qualify for services.
- The student was screened in kindergarten and qualified for services but did NOT take ACCESS in 1st grade.
- The original HLS from the cumulative(temporary) file indicates Yes-No.

What are the next steps?

Scenario 6 - Outcome

- Consultation with the parent regarding the evidence (original HLS, EL record) revealed that the student is an English learner.
- The student does not have a valid screener nor ACCESS within the last 12 months.
- Since she transferred to another school district; the receiving school district must screen the student.
- Depending on the screener result, maybe may continue to be eligible for EL services in her new district.

Scenario 7 – Sol

- Sol enrolls in Grade 6 from another Illinois district.
- The student's parents have completed the HLS as Yes-No.
- The district checks the student's cumulative (temporary) folder in SIS to discover that the student has never been identified as an EL and has no EL record.
- Initial HLS was No-No.

What would be the next step?

Scenario 7 - Outcome

- Consultation with the parent regarding the evidence (original HLS) about if it was their intention to indicate another language
- The student currently is not an EL.
- Since she is a transfer from another school district, the receiving school can apply Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1)(c), or
- Depending on the screener result, Sol may be eligible for EL services in her new district.

ELP Screening Exception: Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1) (C)

All
criteria
must
be TRUE

For students
eligible to
participate in
statewide
assessments

- Resides in home where a language other than English is spoken, **AND**
- The student was not identified as an English learner in the previous district, **AND**
- The student did not receive EL services in the last school year, **AND**
- The student has met state standards in reading and math on the most recent state assessment or on a nationally normed assessment.

Outcome [Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1) (C) application]

- The student meets the following items of exemption at this time in review:
 - Student resides in a home that has another language other than English.
 - Student has NOT been previously identified as an EL.
 - Student NEVER received services previously.
- District now must review the nationally normed state testing scores of the student.

Student Assessment Data and Scores Report

Student ID:

School Year: Previous
Sol

Sending CUSD:00
Stellar Elem School

Demographics

School Administration Package (local) ID:
Birth Date:
Race/Ethnicity:
Gender: F
Homeless Indicator: N
Migrant Indicator: N
EL Indicator: N
IDEA Services: N
FRL/Low Income Indicator: N
21st Century Indicator: N

Testing

Test Taken: IAR
Grade Level When Tested: 5
IAR ELA/L Test Code: ELA05
IAR Mathematics Test Code: MAT05
IAR Administration (Fall or Spring): S
IAR Report Suppression Action (ELA/L):
IAR Report Suppression Action (Math):
IAR Reason for No Valid Test Attempt (ELA/L): n/a
IAR Reason for No Valid Test Attempt (Math): n/a
First Year in U.S. School Indicator: N
RCDTS for Home School: 190222030262013
RCDTS for Serving School: 190222030262013
RCDTS for Testing School: 190222030262013

English Language Arts/Literacy

IAR Overall Scale Score (Range 650-850) 772
IAR Performance Level (Range 1 low to 5 high) 4
IAR Student Growth Percentile (Range 1 to 99) 32.0
IAR Reading
Scale Score (Range 10-90) 60
Subclaim: Literary Text* 1
Subclaim: Informational Text* 1
Subclaim: Vocabulary* 2
IAR Writing
Scale Score (Range 10-60) 39
Subclaim: Writing Expression* 1
Subclaim: Knowledge and Use of Language Conventions* 1

*Subclaims (Range 3 low to 1 high)

Mathematics

IAR Overall Scale Score (Range 650-850) 782
IAR Performance Level (Range 1 low to 5 high) 4
IAR Student Growth Percentile (Range 1 to 99) 55.0
IAR Mathematics
Subclaim: Major Content* 1
Subclaim: Expressing Mathematical Reasoning* 1

Outcome [Ill. Admin. Code 228 Section 228.15 (e)(1) (C) application]

- Student resides in a home that has another language other than English.
- Student has NOT been identified as an EL previously.
- Student NEVER had received services previously.
- Student HAS met or exceeded on state content area testing.
- Do not screen. Sol is not an English learner.

Resources

Resources

- [Identification \(isbe.net\)](http://isbe.net)
- [105 ILCS 5/ School Code. \(ilga.gov\)](http://ilga.gov)
- [23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE CH. I, 2. 228 \(isbe.net\)](http://isbe.net)
- [Identification of Potential English Learners and Exit Criteria](#)
- [Student-Information-System-Multilingual-Virtual-Session.pdf \(isbe.net\)](#)

Reminders

- [The 2020 English Language Development Framework](#) is the current resource for English language development standards.
- The two questions on the home language survey asking about another language other than English presence and use are not to be altered.
- A **NEW** [Alternate ACCESS](#) was implemented in fiscal year 2024 for ACCESS testing.
 - Score reports were delayed due to standard/score setting. Release of scores were in September 2024.
- **WIDA Alternate Screener**
 - **Not adopted in Illinois at this time and cannot be used.**
- Administration of new Kindergarten ACCESS
 - All staff administering the Kindergarten ACCESS need to recertify after 9/29/2025.

Questions?

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Thank you