



Promoting equitable access to language support services
for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

JUNE 2023

January 2024

English Learners/Bilingual Education Announcements

ISBE-Sponsored WIDA Professional Development

WIDA self-paced workshops for fiscal year 2024 are available from now through Aug. 31, 2024. Log in to your WIDA Secure Portal to register for the self-paced workshops. If you do not have a WIDA Secure Portal, please contact sserrano@isbe.net.

Please [register](#) for free ISBE-sponsored WIDA virtual facilitated webinars and other in-person professional development offerings that are available.

Professional Learning Opportunity Links

[IRC free professional learning opportunities](#)

FY 2024 EL - Title III Immigrant Student Education Program Grant Now Available in IWAS

The fiscal year 2024 English Learner (EL) - Title III Immigrant Student Education Program grant is now available in the electronic Grants Management System through the ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) system. The list of eligible school districts can be found on the [FY24 Immigrant Student Education Programs document](#).

All eligible applicants must create and submit an application via the IWAS system. Once you are in the system, create your application by selecting "Year: 2024" and choosing "Create Application." Some grants display a "Yes" checkbox that must be selected before the "Create Application" button appears.

Due Date: Please complete and submit your application by **March 1, 2024**, to receive a Sept. 1, 2023, start date. Funds will be disbursed according to expenditure reports that are submitted after applications are approved.

Please make sure that approval groups are properly assigned through IWAS in order to access the system and submit your application. Technical assistance pertaining to items not covered by the instructions link in IWAS may be obtained by contacting your program consultant at multilingual@isbe.net or calling 312-814-3850.

Resources to Support You with WIDA AMS in 2023-24

Big changes came to [WIDA AMS for the 2023-24 school year](#). Here are some resources to help you navigate new applications and updated menus as ACCESS for ELLs testing approaches.

Online Help: This new feature provides step-by-step instructions to help you complete tasks in Import Management, Student Management, and Test Management. Each Online Help section contains an introduction with a side-by-side comparison of old and new terminology. Find Online Help by **selecting the question mark icon** in the upper right corner of the new applications or [see all the topics in one place](#).

Knowledge Articles: If you're looking for more in-depth explanations to answer your questions about managing users, adding accommodations, ordering test materials, or accessing reports, take advantage of knowledge articles compiled by Data Recognition Corp. (DRC). Select **DRC Customer Service > WIDA AMS Knowledge Articles** from the My Applications menu to browse or search for your desired topic.

Q&A Webinar Series: Take advantage of our ongoing Q&A webinar series to present your questions straight to the experts. WIDA and DRC offer webinars on a variety of topics, from managing students and registrations to technology troubleshooting. View the full list of upcoming and recorded webinars on the [Webinars](#) page in the WIDA Secure Portal.

Still have questions? The WIDA Client Services Center and DRC Customer Service teams are here to support you. Learn more on the [Contact Us](#) webpage on the WIDA website.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS Update

It has come to the attention of WIDA, that some of the WIDA Alternate ACCESS Test Administrator Scripts do not include explicit guidance regarding 1) when to repeat QUESTIONS in the Writing domain, and 2) how a test administrator can use the Writing domain word lists. **Please note that these issues relate only to WIDA Alternate ACCESS.**

Below, they provide more detail on the nature of the two issues and then outline the steps they're taking to make sure test administrators have access to this clarifying information moving forward.

Writing Domain Question Repetition for WIDA Alternate ACCESS

All QUESTIONS in the Writing domain are intended to be repeated for students who either score Approaches or do not respond to a QUESTION the first time. While the Test Administrator Manual for the Writing domain provides accurate guidance for the repetition of QUESTIONS, the Test Administrator Script does not.

Writing Domain Word List for WIDA Alternate ACCESS

Some Writing domain tasks include a word list to help students construct their response. Test administrators can read word lists to students for ALL grade level clusters. The K-2 grade cluster includes this explicit language, while other grade clusters do not.

To make sure test administrators have this information, WIDA is taking the following **actions**:

1. Updating the online Test Administrator Manual to include specific mention of the word lists.

2. Updating the Alternate ACCESS: Administration and Scoring training course with additional explicit instructions for both the word lists and repetition of QUESTIONS.
3. Sending a direct email message to all test administrators who have completed or enrolled in the WIDA Alternate ACCESS training course.
4. Working with DRC to include a clarification sheet in all materials that have not yet been shipped.

WIDA is still looking for schools/districts that are willing to have WIDA/SEA staff travel to their site and observe some of their Alternate ACCESS test administrations between January 29 and March 1, 2024. These observations are a key part of the [Alternate ACCESS Inter-Rater Reliability \(IRR\) Study for Listening and Reading](#).

As additional sites are still needed for the study, WIDA will actively recruit districts and schools through our opt-in interest lists beginning with WIDA Wednesday on January 10 and Monday Mail on January 16.

Visiting International Teacher Program

Program Extensions

Visiting International Teachers (VITs) working in your district who are in their third year in the program and have a DS-2019 program end date of June 30, 2024, may be eligible to extend their program for an additional one or two years. Host districts must initiate the request with ISBE, which then submits it to the U.S. Department of State for final approval. **The application window is now open with a strict deadline of March 15, 2024.** We encourage host districts to submit this as soon as possible so that their VITs may receive their extended DS-2019 forms with plenty of time to make J-1/J-2 visa renewal arrangements over the summer break. Please note there is a fee of \$367 owed to the U.S. Department of State for each extension request. We have sent out detailed instructions on the request process to any host districts with VITs in their third year. Please email us at exchangeteachers@isbe.net with any questions or to [simply let us know if the district will not be extending any VIT's program.](#)

SY 2024-25 Recruitment

Our recruitment partners in Spain, Poland, Morocco, Mexico, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been promoting ISBE's VIT program and will soon begin working with us to finalize the 2024-25 VIT candidate cohort for placement in early 2024. We will soon reach out to all VIT host districts to confirm the date and time for the virtual host district meeting during the week of Jan. 29–Feb. 2 before we begin to collect requests to interview VIT candidates. It is especially important for districts that will request to interview VITs this year to have at least one staff member attend this session. Any interested districts that have not yet signed a program memorandum of understanding must have that in place with ISBE by then to be included in the school year 2024-25 interview process. Please email exchangeteachers@isbe.net with any questions or to learn more about how your district can join the program.

Assistance with EL Data Errors

We have been receiving requests to help support districts to correct SIS entries for students that were incorrectly identified as English Learners. A new system/procedure has been established where Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Multilingual/Language Development Department, can assist districts in correcting mistakes during the identification process of an English Learner. Districts can reach out to multilingual@isbe.net for more information. Any type of request will need to have sufficient data to support the correction request. The ISBE team will review the information and determine if a correction is to be made in the Student Information System record.