

INITIAL IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

The purpose of this circular is to bring clarity and guidance regarding the initial identification and assessment of Multilingual Learners (MLs) in BPS. The district is obligated to appropriately assess and identify MLs as outlined in several key documents, including by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Guidance¹, the [Successor Settlement Agreement](#) and [META Consent Decree](#). To meet our obligations to our MLs and their families, we must ensure that all BPS students are correctly assessed, identified, placed, and receive appropriate services.

¹ <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/id-assess-place-reclass.html>

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1. ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Under federal² and state³ law, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) must take appropriate steps to identify potential Multilingual

² Paragraph 28 of The Successor Agreement between the United States of America and the Boston Public Schools and U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) EL policy document entitled Dear Colleague Letter, English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient parents/guardians (01/7/2015) (referred to as “Dear Colleague letter” hereafter) at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>.

³ [Guidance on Placement, Progress Monitoring and Reclassification Procedures of English Learners](#), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and G. L. C. 71A; 603 CMR 14.02.

Learners (MLs) in K2 through grade 12 and provide them with the appropriate English Learner services and supports. The initial identification and assessment of Multilingual Learners follows the requirements outlined in paragraphs 28-31 of the Successor Settlement Agreement:

Successor Settlement Agreement Paragraph 28:

A student must be referred for an English language proficiency assessment when the results of the Home Language Survey (HLS) indicate that a language other than English is:

- The primary language used in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student
- The language most often spoken by the student, and/or
- The language that the student first acquired.

If the parent/guardian answered “yes” to one or more of the above questions, the student is required to be assessed using the grade-level, state-required language screening assessment. Please refer to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education *Guidance on the Initial Identification of English Learners* for more information on identifying and evaluating ELs.

The Successor Agreement obligates the district to ensure that English language proficiency (ELP) assessments shall be accomplished as soon as possible, but no later than 20 days from the student's enrollment during the school year, or within 20 days or by the first day of the new school year, whichever comes later, if the student enrolls during the summer. During peak seasons, January 1 through March 15 and August 1 through October 31, ELP assessments shall be accomplished as soon as possible, but no later than 25 days. Parents/guardians shall be

informed in writing of assessment results and student assignment options no later than 2 school days after the completion of the assessments. The Newcomers Assessment and Counseling Center provides written notice of the assessment scores and school choice options to the parent/guardian at the end of the assessment appointment.

TABLE 1: The following table delineates the process of Multilingual Learner identification at the time of enrollment. It highlights the departments' roles and responsibilities and their order in Multilingual Learner identification.

Please note: Bolded action steps relate directly to English Learner identification and placement.

| Department | Action Steps |
|---|--|
| Welcome Center | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect and verify documents (medical forms, residency, birth date). 2. Administer Home Language Survey (HLS) to all families to identify potential Els. 3. Score HLS and inform families of the result. 4. Schedule an appointment at NACC if the HLS score is anything other than EEE. 5. Assign an initial case number to the student. |
| Newcomers Assessment and Counseling Center (NACC) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview families and collect information about students' academic background. 2. Assess K-12 students in English and determine the initial ELD level. 3. Administer Native Language test to newcomer students in grades 3-12 in the major languages spoken in BPS if students indicate interrupted learning or limited formal education. 4. Inform families of their program options so that they feel equipped to make the best choice for their child. 5. Enter families' choices in SIS so BPS can begin the assignment process. |
| Enrollment Planning Services | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve case for assignment. 2. Assign a BPS identification number to the case. 3. Review the school choices and use the NACC placement recommendations to assign the student to a school. 4. Maintain student assignment data. 5. Notify families by letter of their final assignment. |

PARENT NOTIFICATION AND COUNSELING

After scoring the assessment, assessment specialists review all available information (e.g., transcripts, IEP, 504 plans) collected from the parent/guardian during the intake interview to propose a program recommendation.

Next, testers sit with the parent/guardian to inform them, in the language of their preference, of the results of the assessment. Testers use all available information collected during the language testing appointment to counsel the parent/guardian about EL programs and services (e.g., SEI, SLIFE, Dual Language, etc.) that are appropriate for their child's proficiency level. After counseling the families, testers enter scores into the student's case record in Aspen SIS, which generates a list of schools with the appropriate programs and services. The parent/guardian then ranks schools on their choice list and signs the school selection form. The tester enters the parent/guardian's rank order choices into SIS, and the case is forwarded to the Welcome Services student assignment team. At the end of the visit, the family receives a copy of the documents (e.g. Notification of Initial Assessment Form they signed.

2. REASON TO SUSPECT A STUDENT MAY BE AN ENGLISH LEARNER

Paragraph 28 of the Successor Settlement Agreement requires the district to assess enrolling students whose Home Language Survey does not indicate a language other than English in the case that "there is any other reason to believe the student is not proficient in English." The district has operationalized this requirement as detailed in the tables in section 3.

3. PROCESS TO ASSESS STUDENTS FOR ENGLISH LEARNER STATUS WHO HAVE AN HLS OF EEE

Some students may be suspected of being MLs but may not have been identified during enrollment because of an HLS score of EEE. The following table outlines the action steps necessary to determine if such a student is an ML.

TABLE 2: Please see Table 2 for the process to assess students who have an HLS of EEE and are suspected of being Multilingual Learners.

| Department | Action Steps |
|------------|--|
| School | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Obtain written parent permission that they would like to amend their HLS results in Aspen to indicate another language is spoken at home and that they would like their student tested for ELE services before administering testing. Parents must include the updated home language on their request. Parents must be informed that this change will result in testing.2. Submit this request to the EL-CCR with a copy of the updated letter of the home language survey to upload, or, if it is an email, please make sure the email is one that is stored in Aspen in the contact section.3. Attach the documentation to the EL-CCR form and forward these items to the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education at ommeequityteam@bostonpublicschools.org. |

| Department | Action Steps |
|--------------------------------|--|
| OMME Equity and Accountability | <p>4. Review EL-CCR submission for a first language change request and either approve or deny based on meeting requirements for submission.</p> <p>5. Inform school of EL-CCR decision.</p> |
| School | <p>6. Wait for an approval email and for the HLS results to be changed in Aspen. Please <i>do not</i> test the student until you have received approval from OMME.</p> <p>7. Test the student with the WIDA Screener. You must administer the test to the student in person with a trained test administrator.</p> <p>8. Enter the test results in Aspen under the language tab.</p> <p>9. Submit another request to the EL-CCR for the student to have an ELD level and include the results of the test in the upload of documentation.</p> |
| OMME Equity and Accountability | <p>10. Review EL-CCR submission for a NEL to EL request and either approve or deny based on meeting requirements for submission.</p> <p>11. Inform school of EL-CCR decision.</p> |
| School | <p>12. Schedule student for ELE services appropriate to their ELP.</p> |

TABLE 3: The following table outlines the steps that must be taken before assessing a student's potential Multilingual Learner Status based on their Home Language Survey Score.

| HLS Result | Procedure | |
|--|--|--|
| OEE/EOE/E EO | Parent/ Guardian Permission Required? | YES: Welcome Center explains testing implications of Home Language Survey results during the enrollment process. |
| | Action Steps | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student is identified as a potential ML upon registration via the Home Language Survey at the Welcome Center. 2. Student case is transferred to NACC where the family is interviewed and student is assessed. 3. Student is assigned. 4. Student receives ACCESS testing annually until they meet exit criteria. |
| OEE/EOE/E EO But student tested proficient during testing at the time of enrollment | Parent/ Guardian Permission Required? | YES: Schools must contact the parent/guardian and inform them they have concerns based on evidence (i.e., academic performance, test results) and want to assess their student. The school must document all meetings and information shared with parents and include them in the ELD folder. |
| | Action Steps | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent/guardian(s) must put in writing that they would like to have their student reassessed. Please inform the parent that this may lead to their student being identified as a Multilingual Learner (ML) which will result in EL services being required and an annual ACCESS |

| HLS Result | Procedure | |
|------------|-----------|---|
| | | <p>assessment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If the parent/guardian(s) agree, test the student with the appropriate WIDA assessment. You must administer the test to the student in person with a trained test administrator. 3. Enter the test results in Aspen under the LEP Testing Template. Contact NACC with questions about the LEP Testing Template. 4. Submit a request to the EL-CCR for the student to have a NEL to EL change, and include the parent's documentation, school documentation, and results of the test in the upload of documentation. |

TABLE 4: The following table outlines which test a trained test administrator should administer to a student who may be a potential Multilingual Learner.

Please note: A grade level begins on July 1st of the summer before entering a grade and ends on June 30th of the year of completing that grade.

| Student Grade Level | Correct Screener Test | Who Can Administer |
|---|--|---|
| K1 | WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (2 domains) | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>Currently enrolled K1 students are tested annually beginning April 15 for K2 seats in the upcoming school year.</i> |
| K2 <i>First half of the school year</i> | WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (2 domains) | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>OR</i> NACC by request and with appointment |
| K2 <i>Second half of the school year (from Tuesday after MLK day)</i> | WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (4 domains) | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>OR</i> NACC by request and with appointment |
| 1 <i>First half of the school year (until Friday Before MLK</i> | WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (4 domains) | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>OR</i> NACC by request and with appointment |

| Student Grade Level | Correct Screener Test | Who Can Administer |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Day)</i> | | |
| 1 <i>Second half of the school year (from Tuesday after MLK Day)</i> | WIDA Screener Online | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener Online (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>OR</i> NACC by request and with appointment |
| 3-12 <i>With 1 or 2 years in district</i> | WIDA Screener Online & Native Language Assessment | NACC <i>only</i> |
| 3-12 <i>With 3 or more years in district</i> | WIDA Screener Online | Teachers currently certified in WIDA Screener Online (include TIII Parent Notification of Initial Identification) <i>OR</i> NACC by request and with appointment |

TABLE 5: The following table outlines when ACCESS Testing is appropriate for Multilingual Learners.

| Student Details | Administer ACCESS Test? |
|--|---|
| A student is a suspected ML but has not been confirmed as a Multilingual Learner. | No. <i>Do not</i> administer ACCESS. Instead, follow the steps to confirm a suspected EL outlined in Table 1. |
| A student is a confirmed ML based on the correct screener test. (Steps for identifying correct screener test outlined in Table 2). | Yes. Administer ACCESS. |
| A student is a confirmed ML based on the correct screener test BUT has opted out of some or all English Learner services. (Steps for identifying correct screener test outlined in Table 2). | Yes. Administer ACCESS. |
| A student scored Proficient on the correct screener test. (Steps for identifying correct screener test outlined in Table 2). | No. <i>Do not</i> administer ACCESS. |
| A student scored Proficient on ACCESS the previous year | No. <i>Do not</i> administer ACCESS. |

4. K1 SCHOOL-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT CALENDAR SY 2024

Every year, school-based designated testers assess approximately 1,300 K1 students under the training and guidance of NACC. To ensure that all K1 students identified as Multilingual Learners (MLs) receive the related services and programs in SY 2023-2024, we ask schools to carefully review, prepare for, and adhere to the assessment calendar below.

TABLE 6:

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|---|--|----------|
| STEP 1 Convene Language Assessment Team | <p>School staff should review their K1 roster to start developing their assessment schedule:</p> <p>Following NACC training, schools will receive a list of students that need to be assessed. <i>Schools should carefully review this list.</i></p> <p>If a school suspects a student should be on the list to be assessed because a language other than English is spoken in the home, the LAT should convene to determine if the student is eligible for testing. Contact NACC and the OMME Instruction Team if you have any questions about this.</p> <p>Although explicit parental consent is not</p> | 03/01/24 |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|--|--|----------|
| | required, schools should meet with parents/guardians to discuss concerns and inform them of the plan to assess students with the grade level required language screener (WIDA screener for K1). This communication allows the families to have meaningful access to their child's education. | |
| STEP 2 Identify designated testers | <p>The principal identifies the staff members who will administer the English language proficiency assessment. School leader should submit the name of the <u>school-based designated tester on this form.</u></p> <p>The designated testers should be licensed teachers or licensed staff members who are experienced EL educators.</p> <p>It is recommended that schools select their Language Acquisition Team facilitators (LAT-F), ESL teachers, and K1 teachers familiar with the students as the designated testers.</p> <p>Beginning April 15th, school leaders provide 3 hours for K1 designated testers to watch the WIDA Screener for</p> | 03/01/24 |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | <p>Kindergarten training course and take all the required Quizzes on the WIDA Secure Portal before they come to overview sessions. (3 hours could be during their common planning time, school-based PD time, etc.) Designated testers should use the following Google Form link to submit their SY 2024 WIDA Certificates: Google Form.</p> <p>Schools with K1 programs should designate testers for a test administration overview session.</p> <p>Designated testers will receive a registration link for an overview session no later than Tuesday, April 2, 2024.</p> | |
| <p>STEP 3</p> <p>Attend training session</p> | <p>Schools must allocate time for the designated testers to attend one of the K1 test administration overview sessions.</p> <p>All test administration overview sessions will take place online.</p> <p>Training is designed to support new and experienced testers.</p> | <p>04/2/24 & 04/03/23</p> |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|--|---|-------------------|
| STEP 4 Pick up materials | Designated testers should pick up the testing materials after the overview session at NACC in the Bolling Building. | 04/04/24-04/09/23 |
| STEP 5 Assess identified K1 students | <p>Designated testers assess all identified K1 students with the corresponding English language proficiency assessment.</p> <p>Only testers who attend the training sessions in April can administer the English language proficiency assessments.</p> <p><i>To ensure appropriate test administration, designated testers cannot transfer assessment responsibilities or “deputize” educators who have not attended a SY 2024 training session.</i></p> <p>Students with disabilities should be tested according to their IEP accommodations. Copies of the IEP accommodations should be attached to the students’ test booklets and forwarded to NACC no later than Friday, May 10, 2024.</p> <p>To ensure that students receive the</p> | 05/10/24 |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|--|--|----------|
| | appropriate placements for the 2024-2025 school year, K1 English language proficiency assessments <i>must be</i> completed no later than Friday, May 10, 2024. | |
| STEP 6 LAT-F input test results, return test answer booklets and requested documents | <p>LAT-F input results of English language proficiency assessments into Aspen SIS to ensure the initial ELD level and test results become a part of the student's assessment record. All test results must be entered into Aspen SIS by Friday, May 10, 2024.</p> <p>Schools <i>must</i> keep copies of the test answer sheets and a hard copy of the WIDA Score Report in the students' ELD folders.</p> <p>If a student was screened and found NOT to be an EL, the school should keep the test answer sheet and the WIDA Score Report in the student's cumulative folder.</p> <p>Schools must return all original test answer booklets and all requested documents to NACC no later than Friday, May 10, 2024 so that OMME can review the data before submitting final test</p> | 05/10/24 |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|---|---|------------|
| | scores to OIIT. | |
| STEP 7 Data Validation | OMME will review assessment samples for data validation. OMME will inform LATFs of any errors in assessment scoring. Schools will be able to see any updates to their data in Aspen SIS after May 17, 2024 . | 05/17/24 |
| STEP 8 Parent Notification Letter | LAT-Fs will inform the parent/guardian of their student's assessment results via the Parent Notification Letter in the parent's preferred language within two weeks after the assessment data is confirmed in Aspen SIS. File a signed copy of the letter in the student's ELD folder. | 05/31/2024 |
| STEP 9 K1 students assigned after 05/10/24 | After the testing window closes on May 10, 2024 , schools must continue to assess all newly assigned K1 students whose HLS indicates any language other than English. The designated tester must borrow a copy of the Kindergarten Screener for testing K1 students from NACC. | 06/14/24 |

| Action Steps | Instructions | Date(s) |
|--------------|---|---------|
| | Designated testers should follow the instructions in Step 4 and Step 5. | |

For more information about this circular, contact:

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|------------------|--|
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