



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** District ELE Program Directors  
**From:** Paul Aguiar, Director, Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement  
Sibel Hughes, ELE Compliance Coordinator, Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement  
**Date:** July 24, 2017  
**Subject:** New Initial Identification Criteria – WIDA Screener for grades 1–12

### Background

In 2016, the WIDA Consortium revised its English language proficiency assessment, **ACCESS for ELLs 2.0**, and introduced a new score scale that requires students to demonstrate a higher level of achievement in order to earn the same proficiency level as they would have on ACCESS 1.0, which has been phased out. This new score scale was used to report scores on the 2017 ACCESS 2.0. Further information can be found in the Commissioner’s memo entitled [ELL Update: New Exit Criteria, Equivalent Proficiency Levels, and Recommended Amount of Language Instruction](#).

The WIDA Consortium has also introduced a new English language proficiency  **screener** for students in grades 1–12 (the “WIDA Screener”) which is aligned with the new ACCESS 2.0 score scale. Effective **September 2018**, the online and paper versions of the WIDA Screener will be the only screener approved for identifying students as “English learners” in grades 1–12. 2017-2018 will be the final year that the WIDA MODEL may be used to identify students in grades 1-12. For the 2017–2018 school year, we are advising schools and districts to use the WIDA Screener to base their instructional and classification decisions on the transitional criteria shown below.

### New Initial Identification Criteria, grades 1–12

The new transitional identification criteria for ELs, are as follows:

**To be eligible for EL status, a student must score the following on the WIDA Screener:**

**At or below:**

- a. an Overall Score of **Level 4.0**; and
- b. a Composite Literacy Score of **Level 4.0**

An updated [Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement, and Reclassification of English Language Learners](#) will be released later this summer. This will assist in making decisions regarding the recommended number of periods of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to provide each student.

Thank you for your attention to this important information. Please contact Sibel Hughes in OELAAA at [shughes@doe.mass.edu](mailto:shughes@doe.mass.edu) or 781-338-3569 if you have questions about the new initial identification criteria.