Important Notice on Changes Related to ELs

April 26, 2017

Topics covered in this notice:

1. Change to Exit Criteria for English Learners *(as sent in a Superintendent's Memo)*
2. More information for EL teachers and coordinators concerning the Change to Exit Criteria for ELs
3. 2017-2018 Transition to the WIDA Screener
4. Monitoring - Common Questions Concerning Years 3 and 4
5. Q&A Session - Changes Concerning ELs - Monday, May 1st
6. Appendix - Technical Information Concerning Change to Exit Criteria

1) Change to Exit Criteria for English Learners

Every year Wyoming's English Learners (ELs) in grades K-12 take the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 test, which determines whether ELs exit from EL programming. Up until now, exit criteria required both a minimum overall composite proficiency level of 5.0, and minimum proficiency levels of 4.0 on all four language domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing).

Due to WIDA's standard-setting process, the bar has been raised for what constitutes a given proficiency level. This change takes effect this school year and will be factored into the score reports that districts and schools receive on May 2, 2017.This change potentially could result in a significant drop in the amount of students that are eligible for program exit. Coupled with the recent switch to an online testing platform with ACCESS 2.0, these changes prompted a review of the current exit criteria.

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) took this as an opportunity to analyze research and proficiency level concordance data from WIDA, as well as statewide data from both last year's ACCESS 2.0 and statewide summative testing (PAWS) to recalibrate exit criteria. Starting this year, the single exit criterion used in Wyoming for EL program exit will be a minimum overall composite proficiency level of 4.6. No requirement will be in place for domain proficiency levels.

As data is collected and analyzed from the recently initiated ACCESS 2.0 and from the new statewide summative assessment which will be administered for the first time next year, the WDE will continue to maintain a critical eye on exit criteria for ELs.

2) More information for EL teachers and coordinators concerning the Change to Exit Criteria for ELs

The new exit criterion of a minimum overall composite proficiency level of 4.6 is not retroactive and will only apply to standard-setting adjusted ACCESS 2.0 scores from this current school year (2016-2017) and beyond.

One good starting place for more info on the subject of the WIDA standard-setting process and the resultant score changes is this page. Three related webinars have occurred on the subject, two national ones that are available on that page (top right in the gray box) and a Wyoming-specific Q&A (this one is on the state profile WIDA page, bottom tab). The national webinars gave more detailed overviews while the Wyoming specific one was more of a Q&A session.

The key thing to keep in mind is that neither the scale scores nor the test itself have changed. All that WIDA has changed is the correlation between specific scale scores and their corresponding proficiency levels. So for example, while an overall scale score of 348 for a third grader would have resulted in a proficiency level of 5.0 last year, a third grader taking the same test this year with that same scale score of 348 would be getting a 4.2 for their proficiency level. So again, the interpretation, or the mapping of the scale score to a proficiency level, is the only thing that has changed. Here is a graph that shows **an example** of what that might look like for a given grade (again, this mapping differs for each grade so the charts would look different depending on the grade).

The test and scores did not change.

The *interpretation* of the scale scores into *proficiency levels* changed.

English Language Development
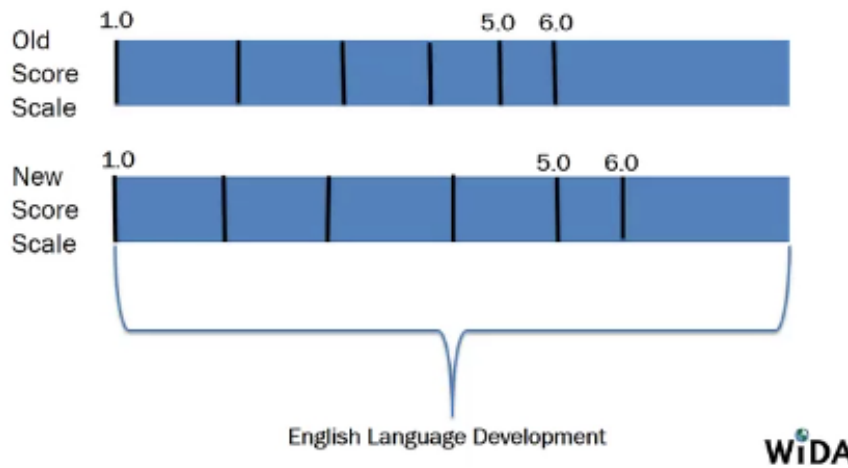
WiDA

Distribution of Overall Composite Proficiency Level Scores Using Old and New Score Scale, Grade 8

Proficiency Level Key
- Level 6
- Level 5
- Level 4
- Level 3
- Level 2
- Level 1
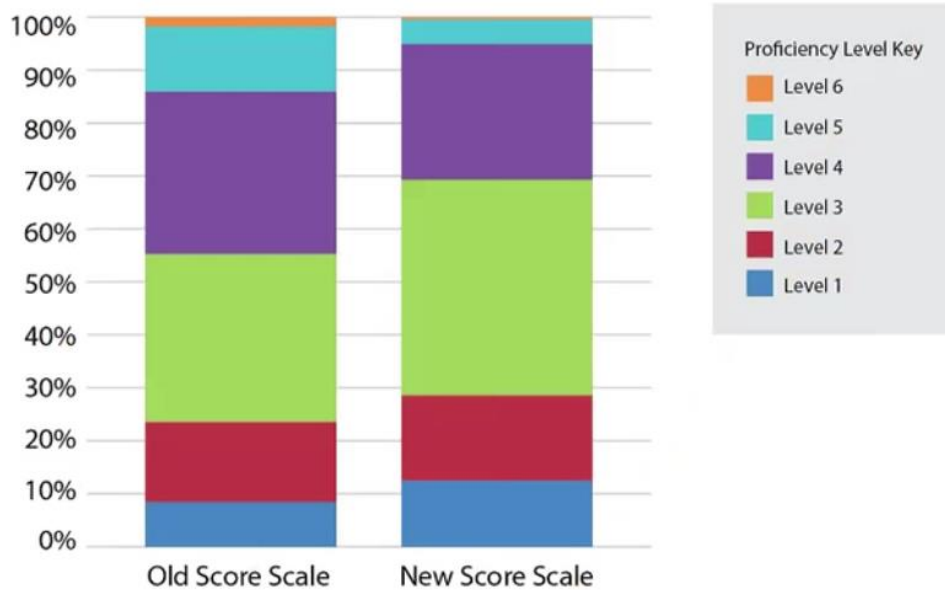
In effect, WIDA is indirectly changing the exit criteria of all states and members in the consortium, which in turn affects how many students are eligible for exit. To give some rough numbers averaged across the grade levels, what was previously a 5.0 before is now a 4.3, and what was previously a 6.0 is now 5.0. While it is not possible to score a proficiency level higher than 6.0, it should be taken into account that a 6.0 can encompass a range of scale scores. The above graphic shows the example of 8th grade where previously around 15% of students would have exited services under the previous state exit criteria, and now around 5% would exit (not factoring in the domain scores).

Part of the rationale behind the recalibration of Wyoming's exit criteria, beyond the fact that the state is undergoing several shifts in assessment, from the switch to online WIDA testing to the new assessment coming in 2017-2018, is that if these criteria are set to change, research and local data should also be involved in this process. Through methodology based on the work of Dr. Gary Cook, a researcher from WIDA, our lead statistician Dr. Michael Flicek analyzed our local data to help determine our best course of action. For more info about his analysis see the appendix.

Due to its newness, there are not a large amount of data available for WIDA 2.0, and of course no data is available for the upcoming statewide summative assessment. Each year, the WDE will be able to gain data that will help in continuing to evaluate the exit criteria. So while it may appear at first glance that Wyoming is "lowering" the bar for exit, it is actually being raised in terms of what overall scale score is needed on average to exit compared to last year. The new criterion of 4.6 overall would have roughly averaged as a 5.5 across the grade levels on the old proficiency scale.

Finally, it should also be noted that after students exit EL programming, federal guidelines require that they enter a two year monitoring period. **This monitoring is crucial to see if a student was possibly exited from EL programming prematurely.** If a student struggles academically during this period (or even after), a Building Intervention Team or similar evaluation team can refer this student to be rescreened as an EL student if they believe the student may be struggling due to issues related to English acquisition. More information on this can be found in the Wyoming EL FAQ online (question 5). Monitoring is also covered below in part 4.

3) 2017-2018 Transition to the WIDA Screener

During the 2017-2018 school year, Wyoming will be transitioning to the WIDA Screener (click the link for more info) for grades 1-12. There are two versions of the WIDA Screener: WIDA Screener Paper and WIDA Screener Online. WIDA Screener Online is very similar to the look and feel of the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 Online test, and also similarly uses the DRC AMS system (though all scoring is local for the Screener). As for Kindergarten, no changes will occur for the 2017-2018 school year; MODEL and the W-APT will be the two allowable Kindergarten screeners, as before.

WIDA has announced that all materials and training webpages pertaining to the W-APT for grades 1-12 will be removed from WIDA's website on August 31st. Despite this, districts and schools can continue to use the W-APT in grades 1-12 until January 1st of 2018 as they transition to using the WIDA Screener. WIDA will also continue to offer support for the W-APT to any WIDA/DRC district/school-level point of contact (help@wida.us, 866-276-7735 M-F 7am-4pm MT) during this transitional time. Because the grades 1-12 W-APT materials and training resources are being removed from the WIDA website on August 31st, **please download/print any materials and make sure all staff complete any training that is needed for W-APT (grades 1-12) prior to this date.** Again, this only applies to grades 1-12, and will not affect any of the materials or training for the Kindergarten W-APT.

Anyone who previously had access to the W-APT materials/training on the WIDA website should now have access to WIDA's materials/training for the WIDA Screener. Just as with the W-APT, access to WIDA Screener materials/training does not automatically go hand-in-hand with a new WIDA account, so new users will need the district/school-level WIDA account administrator to grant or request such access if it hasn't already been given any for new accounts. If any issues are encountered with the AMS system (which is now tied to the WIDA Screener Online), the point-of-contact for WIDA/DRC can contact DRC directly about this (WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com, 855-787-9615).

Districts and schools may have specific policies on the chain of communication concerning contact with WIDA or DRC. If you are unsure whether you should make contact, check with the appropriate administrator or assessment coordinator before doing so.

4) Monitoring Years 3+4 / WDE684 - Common Questions Concerning ELs

Several questions have been fielded in the last few weeks regarding students in Monitoring Year 3 and Monitoring Year 4, as well as how to report students who exit services on the WDE684. The following will attempt to help address these questions:

The current 2016-2017 EL guidebook available on the WDE Title III page delves into this topic. Here is an excerpt from the "ELL, Refused, and Monitor Student Reporting" section of the guidebook which discusses both reporting for WDE684 and state funding:

[The second WDE684 data element related to ELs] is the "Student ELL Monitoring" field (1, 2, 3 or 4). The definition provided for this data element is:
·   Due to upcoming reporting changes with ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), beginning in 2016-17 WDE is collecting 4 years of monitor status for former EL students.
·   Once an Active EL student has achieved English proficiency on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0™, the student is required to be entered into Monitor Status for 4 years.
o   1 - Former EL student, year 1 Monitor Status
o   2 - Former EL student, year 2 Monitor Status
o   3 - Former EL student, year 3 Monitor Status
o   4 - Former EL student, year 4 Monitor Status
·   In keeping with the Active EL definition for federal funding and reporting, students are no longer "Active EL students" for these primary purposes once they reach proficiency on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0™. It follows from this federal definition and the wording of the WDE684 form that if Student ELL Monitoring is submitted with a value of 1, 2, 3 or 4 (the only allowable values), the Student ELL field must be N for this same student.
·   For state funding purposes, the "EL subgroup" includes the count for student records with a value of Y in Student ELL or value of 1 or 2 in the Student ELL Monitoring field (year 1 and 2 monitored former EL students). The most recent WDE684 data element resource is located at http//portals.edu.wyoming.gov/wise/.

> **Important WDE684 Note:**
> The field "StudentELL" status should **NOT** change from "Y" to "N" until the **following school year** for students who achieve proficient status in the current school year and are no longer active ELs. Similarly, the StudentELLMonitoring field should **NOT** be changed or incremented until the **following school year**.

In Wyoming, the statuses of Year 3 Monitoring and Year 4 Monitoring are **ONLY** used for accountability reporting purposes. The existence of these statuses does not change anything as far as requirements for potentially bringing struggling students back into EL programming or any actual educational services. As mentioned in section 2 of this notice, the period for monitoring whether a student has been exited prematurely and may need to be rescreened remains at two years.With that being said, nothing prevents a school or district from rescreening a student after their 2-year monitoring period if a BIT/MTSS team, for example, were to determine that a student needs to be rescreened.

Also, as touched on in the excerpt above, **Year 3 and Year 4 students are not counted under the "EL subgroup" or the "at-risk" group** under the state funding model.

For this reporting year, the WDE is phasing in Monitoring Year 3 status for the WDE684. Students who were marked as Monitoring Year 2 in 2015-2016 should be parked as Monitoring Year 3 this school year. The WDE is not expecting districts/schools to document any Monitoring Year 4 status for this school year. Then at the beginning of 2017-2018 , students who were reported as Monitoring Year 3 students this school year should be changed to Monitoring Year 4. This way 2017-2018 will be the first year where all 4 years of monitoring status will be reported on the WDE684, as is needed to comply with this reporting change under ESSA.

5) Q&A Session - Changes Concerning ELs - Monday, May 1st

On May 1, 2017 the WDE held an online Zoom Q&A session and technical assistance meeting concerning all the changes and information contained in this notice.

This meeting was recorded and is available for download at the following URL:

https://zoom.us/recording/play/BC1TafuQFTizkWWkFYjECHtP2e0MlS_2QmTpCoTp6R-89hsWhCcRKckRDCpwTZ4H

Appendix

Brief Definition of English Proficient on ACCESS 2.0
Prepared by Michael Flicek, Ed.D.
For the Wyoming Department of Education
(4/5/2017)

The data used in the analyses reported below was the 2016 ACCESS 2.0 results for Wyoming and the PAWS reading test results for Wyoming. The analyses were based upon the total Wyoming sample that had scores on both measures. Table 1 shows the cut-points for the English proficient determination suggested by three different methods with the ACCESS 2.0 performance level scores that correspond to the scale score cut-points for two of the methods. The ACCESS 2.0 composite score was used for the analyses reported here. The overall composite is the most reliable score on the test and it includes information from student performance on each of the four domains measured.

Table 1. ACCESS 2.0 Cut-Points for the English Proficient Determination Derived from Various Methods.

	FreqCut	LRCut	PL-for-LRCut	LRCut-3	PL-for-LRCut-3
Grade 3	361	364	4.7	361	4.6
Grade 4	374	371	4.6	368	4.5
Grade 5	385	377	4.5	374	4.5
Grade 6	381	382	4.5	379	4.4
Grade 7	386	388	4.4	385	4.3
Grade 8	394	394	4.4	391	4.3

FreqCut is the cut-point identified using a frequency distribution method. This method seemed to work pretty well in grade 3 where there were many ACCESS takers who were also proficient on the PAWS reading test. The boxplot for students above this cut-point was very similar to the boxplot for the English only students. The cut-points identified by this method for grades 4 and 5, however, lacked coherence with the cut-points identified for the other grades.

LRCut is the ACCESS score that best predicted the PAWS reading cut-point for proficient based upon a linear regression model. The identified ACCESS scores using this method were quite coherent across the grades. The ACCESS 2.0 performance levels associated with each grade's scale score cut-point are also presented. They range from 4.4 to 4.7.

LRCut-3 is the LRCut minus 3. The actual English Proficient cut-point on the ACCESS test should be somewhere below the score predicted by the PAWS reading proficient cut-point (i.e., not all English Only students are proficient in reading so it is reasonable for the English Learner sample to have students who were not proficient in reading as well). In the grade 3 the FreqCut was 3 points lower than the LRCut. Since grade 3 had the best sample of all grades with the most proficient readers, the grade 3 findings from the FreqCut method are thought to be the most reasonable. Therefore, establishing a cut-point that is three points lower than the ACCESS score that best predicts proficient reading in all of the grades is seen as a reasonable approach with the one year of data that is available to Wyoming.

The performance level scores reported in the table are those for performance level scores associated with the LRCut scale scores. These scores range from 4.4 to 4.7. The performance level scores reported in the table are those for performance level scores associated with the LRCut-3 scale scores. These scores range from 4.3 to 4.6. Figure 1 is a chart that shows the scale score cut-points from each of the three methods.
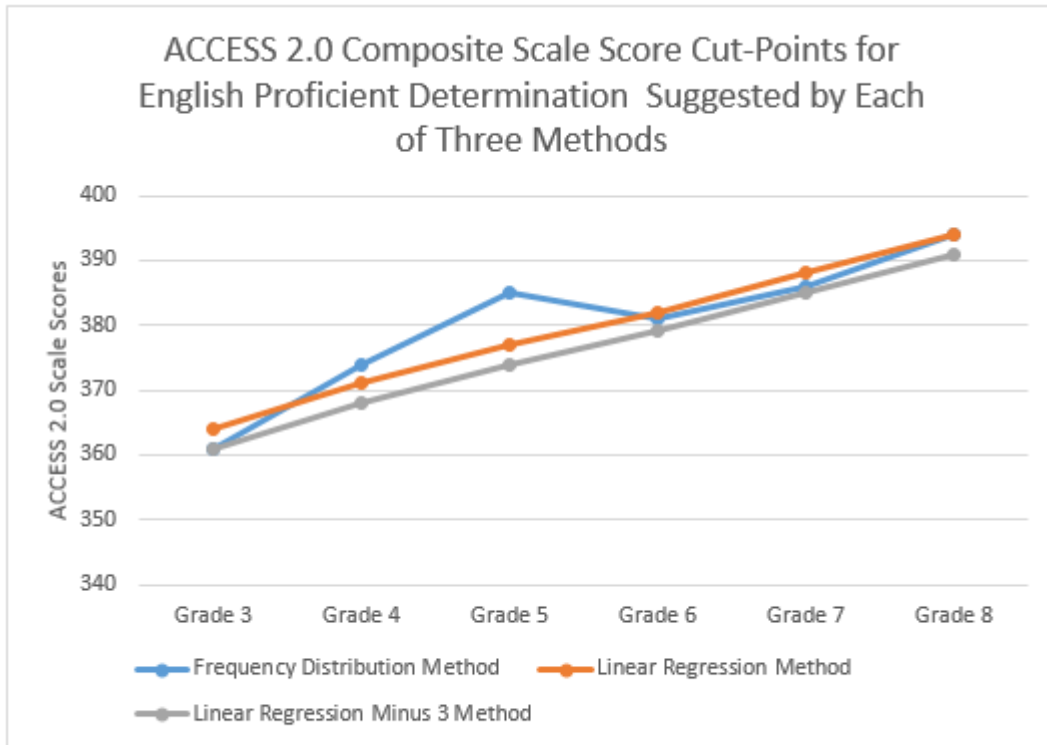
Figure 1

While it is possible to have different performance level cut-points for the English proficient determination for different grades, it would be less confusing to the field if a common performance level cut-point across all grades was established*. **Given the findings presented here for one year of Wyoming data, a performance level cut-point of 4.6 would serve as a reasonable cut-point for the English proficient determination.** Table 2 presents the scale scores that correspond to a performance level of 4.6 in grades 1 and 2.

Table 2. Scale Scores that Correspond to a Performance Level Score of 4.6 in Grades One and Two.

Grade	Scale Score
One	333
Two	347

These findings will be replicated when the 2017 ACCESS 2.0 results are available and can be combined with those from 2016 in order to increase the sample size and the reliability of the findings. Wyoming will have a new English/language arts assessment in 2018 and these analyses should be repeated once results of that assessment become available. Some adjustment to the cut-point will be possible at that time.