

English Language Proficiency Assessments in 2026–27

Overview

2026–27 will feature several notable changes in English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments in Washington. This publication provides a brief overview of the changes both in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the ELP assessment test vendors, WIDA and Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), to assist with planning for 2026–27.

OSPI Updates for 2026–27

OSPI's ELP Assessment office supports the test administration of ELP assessments in Washington, including providing test administration management resources, facilitating user and student management, and giving guidance on test administration records management in coordination with OSPI's Multilingual Education team.

Test Administration Management Updates

There will be several updates to Test Administration Management in 2026–27.

ELP Assessment Office Hour

The ELP Assessment Office Hour series for 2026–27 will begin on Monday, August 3, with an updated Microsoft Teams link and an updated Key Topics schedule.

New to 2026–27, the first office hour of the month will be dedicated to district guest speakers who will share strategies of system success for ELP assessments coordination. These Focused Office Hours are identified in the Key Topics schedule, and districts are encouraged to invite staff who interact with that key topic to attend.

ELP Assessments: Communities of Practice Work Group

New to 2026–27, the ELP Assessments office is launching a Communities of Practice work group. This group will meet quarterly following the ELP Assessments Office Hour to discuss the problem of practice in ELP assessments, share strategies for system success, and sign up to be a district guest speaker during one of the Focused Office Hours. For more information about this opportunity, open to any district user who interacts with ELP assessments, contact OSPI's ELPA office.

ELP Assessment Weekly Newsletter

The weekly ELP Assessment Newsletter will resume on August 3, 2026. District users can subscribe to the newsletter using the link on OSPI's ELP Assessments website: [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#). The newsletter is sent on Monday afternoons and



includes important reminders, upcoming dates, and key tasks and associated links in the ELP assessment year.

Starting in August, the other two related newsletters that contain weekly ELP assessments updates, the Multilingual Education newsletter, and the Washington Assessment Weekly (WAW) newsletter, will only contain a preview of the upcoming office hour and key topics. For important reminders, key tasks, and upcoming dates, users are encouraged to subscribe to the weekly ELP Assessments newsletter.

Updated ELP Assessment Resources

ELP assessment guidance for Washington will be updated for 2026–27 and additional resources for test administration will be available on OSPI’s ELP Assessments website.

Updated resources will include:

- Updated ELP Placement Assessment Guidance.
- Updated ELP Annual Assessment Guidance.
- Updated ELP Assessment District Contact list.

User Management Updates

All users must complete WIDA Secure Portal training annually to recertify in ELP assessments, in addition to required OSPI Test Security Best Practices training for the WIDA ACCESS assessments. There will be no refresher course in 2026–27.

Student Management Updates

There will be a significant number of changes to Student Management in 2026–27 that will impact planning for test administration and the test administration window.

Nightly Records Transfer for WIDA ACCESS

The nightly transfer of student data between CEDARS and the WIDA Assessment Management System (WIDA AMS) will continue in 2026–27. Functionally, it will operate the same as in previous years with the six unique student criteria informing the creation of a new record:

- Student Last Name
- Student First Name
- District
- School
- Grade Level
- SSID

NEW: Accommodations in WIDA ACCESS Braille and Large Print

New in 2026–27, Washington will offer the WIDA ACCESS Braille and Large Print assessments for students who are blind and visually impaired. Students must be identified for either Braille or

Large Print in the Accommodations page of WAMS, and to receive materials in the Initial Materials Order, districts must identify these students by the pre-ID deadline in December. If students are identified after the pre-ID window has passed, districts can order these materials in the Additional Materials Order window. All Additional Materials Orders must be approved by OSPI.

NEW: Mode of Administration for WIDA ACCESS

Currently, districts select mode of administration and domain exemptions in the Washington Assessment Management System (WAMS) in EDS. This will continue from 2026–27, but the registration process will be revised, and the following items will be the only items available for selection in the Mode of Administration on WAMS:

- WIDA Alternate ACCESS
- WIDA ACCESS Paper – Tier A
- WIDA ACCESS Paper – Tier B/C

Students must be identified as a Multilingual Learner (ML) in CEDARS and have either an IEP or a 504 to be selected for one of these Modes of Administration.

Beginning in October 2026, these Modes of Administration can all be identified in WAMS prior to the pre-ID deadline in December for inclusion in the Initial Materials Order, and, if needed after the deadline, ordered in the Additional Materials Ordering window.

NEW: Accommodations in WIDA ACCESS

New to 2026–27, selecting accommodations for students will move from WIDA AMS to WAMS and fold into the nightly transfer of student data between CEDARS and WIDA AMS. These accommodations include:

- NEW in 2026–27: BR – Braille (All domains). You must select one of the following four options for type of Braille kit.
 - NC (UEB Contracted ACCESS Grades 1–5; UEB with Nemeth Grades 6–12)
 - NU (UEB Uncontracted ACCESS Grades 1–5; UEB with Nemeth Grades 6–12)
 - TC (UEB Math/Science Contracted)
 - TU (UEB Math/Science Uncontracted)
- ES – Extended Speaking Test Response Time (Speaking only)
- EM – Extended Testing of a Test Domain Over Multiple Days (All domains)
- IR – In-Person Human Reader (Listening, Speaking, Writing only)
- RP – Repeat In-Person Human Reader (Listening, Speaking, Writing only)
- SD – Interpreter Signs Test Directions in ASL (All domains)
- NEW in 2026–27: LP – Large Print (All domains)
 - Mode of Administration must be P, and Paper Tier must be populated. Include options for Tier A and Tier B/C

- MC – Manual Control of Item Audio (Listening, Speaking, Writing only)
- RA – Repeat Item Audio (Listening, Speaking, Writing only)
- SR – Scribe (Listening, Reading, Writing only)
- RD – Student Responds Using a Recording Device (Writing only)
- NS – Test May be Administered in a Non-School Setting (All domains)
- WD – Word Processor or Similar Keyboarding Device to Respond to Test Items (Listening, Reading, Writing only)
- LV – Low Vision Test Administrator Script (WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten Only) (All domains)
- NEW in 2026–27: AT – Assistive Technology
- NEW in 2026–27: STT – Speech to Text

As with Modes of Administration, students must be identified as a Multilingual Learner (ML) in CEDARS and have either an IEP or a 504 to be selected for any of these accommodations.

District users will have one of two options for managing accommodations in WAMS:

- Add accommodations student by student based on district, grade level, and IEP or 504 drop-down menus.
- Download a template, add accommodations on a spreadsheet, and upload the template to WAMS as a bulk upload.

Because accommodations are not part of the six unique student criteria that generates a new student profile through the nightly upload, accommodations can be adjusted as finalized and the update can be expected on the existing student profile in WIDA AMS within 24–48 hours. There will be no new creation of a student profile when accommodations are changed.

There is a parallel process that will remain available in Test Management on WIDA AMS where users can add accommodations at the student level. Any user with the appropriate permissions in WIDA AMS can do this, including School Coordinators and Test Administrators. However, these must be added student by student and domain by domain.

NEW: Changes to User Access in WIDA AMS

With accommodations now moved from WIDA AMS to WAMS, there will be changes to user access in WIDA AMS. The biggest change is in Student Management, where editing student profiles will be disabled in WIDA AMS for district users.

This means that districts cannot create a student profile in WIDA AMS and cannot edit student accommodations. Districts can still transfer students between schools and between districts.

This change means that students will only be added to WIDA AMS using the nightly upload process. Furthermore, this means that students must be correctly identified as MLs, and their records successfully submitted to CEDARS for their profile to appear in WIDA AMS. Additionally, any request for a demographic change or an assessment mode change must pass through

ARMS for OPSI to manually update. More information about this change will be available in the fall.

Do Not Score Codes and Test Invalidations

Continuing from 2025–26, Student Management changes also include disabling the Do Not Score (DNS) Codes. This is to support the domain exemption process that was moved to WAMS in 2025–26. Starting in 2026–27, the only Do Not Score codes allowed will be the Invalidate (INV) code, and this will only be applied by OSPI following an ARMS report. The use of all other codes is now discontinued.

There are two scenarios where a DNS – INV code might be used. The first is if there is a need to invalidate a test due to an error in test administration or test mode. These requests must be submitted to ARMS and applied by OSPI.

The second scenario is in the event of a test incident submitted to ARMS that results in a state decision to invalidate the test. OSPI will apply the DNS - INV code to the impacted domain and allow the remaining domains to be scored. Depending on the impacted domain, it is the district's choice to continue testing the student or to cease testing activities, as there will be no overall composite score given once a single domain is marked Do Not Score.

Records Management Updates

WIDA released revised WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten assessments in the 2025–26 school year that align to the 2020 standards. WIDA will gather the consortium in July 2026 to establish new cut scores and proficiency level ranges that will apply to the 2026–27 test administration window and beyond.

WIDA ACCESS scores for 2026–27 were released on Thursday, May 21 on WIDA AMS. Districts will be able to access Individual Student Reports (ISRs), Student Score Response (SSR) files, and frequency reports. Any changes made during Post-Reporting Data Validation will be posted to WIDA AMS on July 9, 2026.

As score reports are reviewed, it is important to note the following:

- Exit Criteria: Washington's exit criteria have not changed for 2025–26. Score reports released in Spring 2026 can be used to determine program eligibility and placement for 2026–27. Any students who exit under current criteria will remain exited even if there are any subsequent changes following WIDA ACCESS Standard Setting in July 2026. Conversely, even if there are any subsequent changes to exit criteria following WIDA ACCESS Standard Setting and a student's Spring 2026 score qualifies for exiting under those subsequent changes, the student will remain in program and have an opportunity to exit in Spring 2027.
- Growth Expectations: Growth measurement has not changed for 2025–26 because growth will be measured using the same proficiency cuts set in 2016. Performance levels

in the data released in Spring 2026 will be assigned using an Equi percentile methodology. Performance level cuts will not match the scale score cuts from 2025 and prior. As such, OSPI does not recommend using the ML Expected Progress chart for measuring student growth on the WIDA ACCESS in 2025–26. Districts are encouraged to use the [WIDA ACCESS Analysis Tool](#) and the WIDA Frequency Charts to look at the 2026 WIDA scores and determine domain areas of strength and areas for growth and use those for school improvement planning processes rather than try to use 2024–25 and 2025–26 scores to look at progress between those two years. Since it may be challenging to set specific goals for expected growth, goals may need to be generalized until there are two years of data with the revised WIDA ACCESS assessments.

- Next Steps: Once WIDA ACCESS Standard Setting is complete and WIDA communicates results back to the consortium, OSPI will review the results of the standard setting process, the current exit criteria, and the WSIF Expected Progress Chart. Districts will receive updated communication by December 2026 ahead of the 2026–27 ELP annual assessment test administration window. WIDA offers more information about the standard setting process in an article released in April 2026: [“How Standard Setting Impacts 2026 WIDA ACCESS Scores.”](#)

WIDA Changes for the 2026–27 School Year

WIDA has made several changes in accessibility and technology for the 2026–27 school year.

New Training Course

WIDA will open a new training course for WIDA ACCESS Braille in September. Required WIDA Secure Portal training for Test Administrators (TAs) administering the WIDA ACCESS Braille now includes:

- WIDA ACCESS Braille: Administration
- WIDA ACCESS Paper: Administration
- Speaking Scoring for Grades 1–5/6–12: WIDA Screener and ACCESS Braille

More information about the transition to WIDA ACCESS Braille and Large Print will be available in the fall.

Accessibility Changes to the WIDA Screener

WIDA will offer the WIDA Screener in large print format starting July 2026. This new screener option will be available for purchase on the WIDA Store. Optionally, as with the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, OSPI will cover the charge of the test if districts order and forward the Purchase Order to ELPAssessments@k12.wa.us.

This option is also now available for the WIDA Screener Paper. Previously, requests for this Mode of Administration were processed through OSPI, who shipped the requested test materials to districts. New in 2026–27, districts can order the requested WIDA Screener Paper materials directly from the WIDA Store and forward the Purchase Order to OSPI for purchase.

Both the WIDA Screener Paper and the WIDA Large Print Screener may be used for students who have a documented need for large print assessments.

Accessibility Changes to WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online

WIDA will operationalize several changes to the WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online assessments in alignment with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Test Items

WIDA has made the following changes to test items that will take effect in 2026–27:

- Modification on the use of color on items, including the color and font of the Play and Repeat buttons.
- Replacement of Listening and Reading items that were drag-and-drop response methods.
- Replacement of Hot Spot items.

Alternative Text

Alternative text has been added to more than 10,000 images to support the future implementation of the Screen Reader (SNR) accommodation. Additional changes have been made to support the SNR accommodation at a later time. The SNR accommodation has not yet been made available.

Speaking Domain Changes

The Speaking domain has a new user interface for the microphone check and for the recording buttons.

Accommodation Changes to WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online

WIDA has added two new accommodations to the WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online and has modified one current accommodation. Additional information about configuring the new accommodations will be available later in June on the WIDA Secure Portal.

New Accommodation: Assistive Technology (AT)

The Assistive Technology (AT) accommodation allows students with hearing, visual, cognitive, or physical disabilities to use specific external devices or third-party software to access and interact with test content.

In accordance with state guidance on accommodations outlined in the Guidelines for Tools, Supports, and Accommodations (GTSA), this accommodation should be applied to students who typically use this accommodation as part of their classroom instruction.

Assistive Technology that will be supported for WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online include speech navigation through Windows Voice Access, Smyl Mouse, and multiple eye-tracking software/device options.

This is an embedded accommodation and must be pre-selected in WIDA AMS, and the third-party software must be activated prior to launching DRC INSIGHT.

New Accommodation: Speech-to-Text (STT)

Speech-to-text is third-party software that uses voice recognition to convert speech into written text in applications and text boxes. It helps students who have challenges with typing due to physical motor difficulties, fatigue, dysgraphia, or dyslexia.

This accommodation only applies to the Writing Domain and is only supported for Windows and Chromebook in the 2026–27 school year. For Windows, students may use Read&Write or the built-in Voice Access feature. If using Chromebooks, students will use the built-in Dictation setting.

In accordance with state guidance on accommodations outlined in the Guidelines for Tools, Supports, and Accommodations (GTSA), this accommodation should be applied to students who typically use this accommodation as part of their classroom instruction.

This is an embedded accommodation and must be pre-selected in WIDA AMS, and the third-party software must be activated prior to launching DRC INSIGHT.

Updated Accommodation: Manual Control of Item Audio (MC)

Starting from 2026–27, the accommodation Manual Control of Item Audio (MC) will only apply to the WIDA ACCESS Paper and WIDA Screener Paper. All students taking WIDA ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online will select the Play button on each screen to begin playing audio. The audio will no longer play automatically.

Additionally, the MC accommodation does not apply to WIDA ACCESS for kindergarten, WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Alternate ACCESS, or WIDA Alternate Screener.

The Repeat Item Audio (RA) accommodation will remain an accommodation for online and paper testing.

WIDA Technology Changes for 2026–27

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WIDA AMS: Printing Ticket Changes

DRC is changing options for printing tickets on WIDA AMS. Tickets can now be configured by number (up to twelve per page) and orientation (portrait/landscape) of test tickets printed on a page. There is also an option to not print test ticket instructions or rosters.

DRC INSIGHT: Secure Application Version 17

DRC INSIGHT must be Version 17 on student testing devices. The auto-updates for this are available for Windows x64, Chromebooks, and iPad devices. Windows 10 will no longer be supported for DRC INSIGHT.

DRC INSIGHT: Streaming Audio

Instead of using CDs for the WIDA ACCESS Paper, TAs can now stream Listening and Speaking test audio in WIDA AMS. CDs will not be shipped to districts anymore.

Key Dates for the 2026–27 School Year

Rollover to the 2026–27 school year begins on July 1, 2026.

WIDA ACCESS Key Dates

These are the Pre-Testing Key Dates for the WIDA ACCESS:

- December 4, 2026: Pre-Identification Deadline in WAMS and CEDARS.
- December 31, 2026: Student Management in WIDA AMS opens.
- January 19, 2027: Districts receive test materials.
- January 19, 2027: Additional materials ordering window opens in WIDA AMS.

These are the During Testing Key Dates for the WIDA ACCESS:

- January 25, 2027: WIDA ACCESS test administration window opens.
- February 19, 2027: Four-week cut-off date.
- March 12, 2027: Additional materials ordering window closes.
- March 19, 2027: Close of WIDA ACCESS test administration window.

These are the Post-Testing Key Dates for the WIDA ACCESS:

- March 26, 2027: Deadline to return WIDA ACCESS materials.
- April 21–29, 2027: Pre-Reporting Data Validation window.
- May 20, 2027: Score Reports posted in WIDA AMS.
- June 14–15, 2027: Printed reports shipped to districts.
- June 11–25, 2027: Post-Reporting Data Validation window.
- July 9, 2027: Final data posted to WIDA AMS.

WIDA Webinar Schedule for the 2026–27 School Year

WIDA webinars are available on the WIDA Secure Portal with user access: [LEA Webinars](#).