




WIDATM

An Introduction to English Language
Standards and Assessments
for Parents

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An Introduction to English Language Standards and Assessments for Parents is a three-part webinar series designed specifically for parents , or families, of English language learners (ELLs) in grades K-12. The series is available in English and Spanish on the WIDA website (www.wida.us) and can be shared with families in a variety of ways. This document provides educators an overview of the content of each webinar in the series and offers suggestions for face-to-face facilitation with parent audiences.

Purpose

Families are critical stakeholders within the comprehensive system of standards and assessments of WIDA, and as such, have the right to know and understand how their child is progressing in his or her English language development.

By providing families with information about what it means to be an ELL, the WIDA standards and assessments, and how to interpret student language proficiency scores, parents will be better equipped to engage in meaningful discussions with educators about students' language instruction and progress. For educators, the series raises awareness of the types of questions parents of ELLs may have and offers opportunities to examine local practices in order to enhance communication with families of ELLs.

This webinar series, therefore, serves as a dual capacity-building tool because it enhances the knowledge-base of both educators and families and can strengthen local family engagement efforts.

Organization

Each webinar in the series is organized around three frequently asked questions by parents. In general, the webinars present three focus questions, discuss each question, and provide a final summary of what was discussed throughout the presentation. We recommend parents and educators watch each presentation in order, beginning with Part I and ending with Part III, as each webinar builds on the previous one.

Part I: My child is an English language learner. What does that mean?

Part I provides information about what it means to be an English language learner, how students are identified as English language learners, and how students exit an English language support program.

The following questions are addressed in Part I:

- What does it mean to be an English language learner?
- How was my child identified as an English language learner?
- Will my child always be an English language learner?

Key topics presented in Part I:

- Social language and academic language
- Language domains (listening, reading, speaking, and writing)
- Eligibility and exit criteria

Suggestions for facilitation:

- Provide families concrete examples of texts that illustrate the differences between social and academic language.
- Engage families in a discussion about why it is important for students to be able to process and produce academic language and provide examples of instructional activities used to help students develop language across all four domains.
- Provide families information on local eligibility criteria and screening process, the ACCESS for ELLs test administration window, and local exit criteria.

Part II: My child is an English Language Learner. How is my child's language development supported at school?

Part II provides information about the different ways students use the English language in school, along with information on English language development standards and how these standards can be used to support students' English language development.

The following questions are addressed in Part II:

- How is my child expected to use language in school?
- What are English language development standards and how are they used to help my child?
- What can I do to support my child?

Key topics presented in Part II:

- Language use in school
- WIDA English Language Development Standards for K-12
- Academic standards

Suggestions for facilitation:

- Engage families in a discussion about the different ways language is used in the community and at school. How can these diverse language practices help students?
- Provide families information on the curriculum and instruction of ELLs (e.g., information on local academic standards, types of language supports provided to ELLs).
- Collaborate with families to identify meaningful ways they can support their child. The presentation will encourage parents to stay informed, ask questions, and share information. How could this segment of the presentation be customized to meet your school community's needs?

Part III: My child is an English language learner. How do I know if my child is making progress?

Part III provides information about some of the ways in which schools share information with parents about students' English language development.

The following questions are addressed in Part III:

- What does the ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Score Report tell me?
- What are the WIDA Can Do Descriptors?
- How are English language proficiency scores used?

Key topics presented in Part III:

- ACCESS for ELLs scores
- ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Score Report
- WIDA Can Do Descriptors

Suggestions for facilitation:

- Discuss local practices for informing parents of their child's scores on ACCESS for ELLs. How are scores shared with parents? When are score reports available? Are score reports shared in the home language or in English? Are the WIDA Can Do Descriptors used as a tool to communicate scores to parents, and if so, how?
- Provide families copies of their child's ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Score Report (in their home language if needed), or their child's most recent scores on the ACCESS assessment, as a resource during this presentation. If scores are not available, we suggest that parents be given a blank copy of the score report which can be found on www.wida.us. Facilitators can walk parents through the score report and answer questions they may have.

An Introduction to English Language Standards and Assessments for Parents is a resource educators can use throughout the year and in a variety of ways. We encourage educators to consider how this resource may help to build local capacity, promote meaningful communication with families of ELLs, and strengthen efforts to engage families of ELLs in the education of their children.



WIDA is a consortium of states dedicated to the design and implementation of high quality standards and equitable educational opportunities for English language learners. It is part of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

WIDA | 1025 W. Johnson St., MD#23 | Madison, WI 53706
www.wida.us | 1-866-276-7735 | help@wida.us