Frequently Asked Questions about English Learner Programs at Reopening

This guidance is only intended during the re-opening of schools for virtual and in-person instruction based on the governor's recommendation to suspend in-person schooling until Sept. 28, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is subject to change.

May districts suspend English learner (EL) services for EL students participating in remote or virtual learning?

No. Districts still have a legal obligation to ensure ELs can participate meaningfully in all educational programs and their families can communicate meaningfully to be an active participant in their child's education. Therefore, districts must continue to provide services to English learners (ELs) and their families remotely through methods such as distance and online learning.

See the U.S. Department of Education's "Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents" for the civil rights obligations that states and local education agencies have under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act.

Also see the "*Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*."

Can districts administer the WIDA screener remotely?

No. Currently the WIDA online screener and K W-APT cannot be administered remotely. The WIDA screeners can be administered to students who are attending in-person schooling or to students who are enrolled in virtual learning and whose parents wish to arrange a time for the screener to be administered face-to-face. The district should work with the families of identified students to determine when a WIDA screener or K W-APT can be administered. If a screener cannot be administered within the federal timeline (30 calendar days if enrolled at the beginning of school or 14 calendar days if enrolled after the beginning of school), then districts should use the temporary placement procedures outlined in this document.

How should districts determine if a newly enrolled student is eligible for EL program services if WIDA English language proficiency screeners cannot be administered remotely?

All newly enrolling families must complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). See the recommended HLS template available on the Kentucky Department of Education's webpage. If the student already has a completed HLS in the cumulative or EL folder provided by the

originating district/state or if the primary home language has been reported in Infinite Campus, there is no need to administer a new HLS.

For students who are participating in virtual or remote learning and the HLS indicates the student's primary home language is a language other than English, use the student's assessment history, transcripts, current English language proficiency data and other available information for identification and temporary placement in an EL program until regular schooling resumes and/or until a WIDA screener can be administered to determine permanent placement.

EL services should begin immediately after a student is temporarily or permanently placed in an EL program.

May districts suspend notifications to parents of ELs of their child's placement in an EL program during the COVID-19 pandemic?

No. Districts still must notify parents within 30 calendar days of the beginning of school or within 14 calendar days if enrolled after the beginning of school.

Is there an extension for the identification timeline (30 calendar days if enrolled at the beginning of school or 14 calendar days if enrolled after the beginning of school) to properly identify and screen ELs and notify the parents of their child's placement in an EL program?

No. The timeline described above is a federal timeline. A waiver or extension cannot be granted without approval from the United States Department of Education (USED). The KDE has reached out to USED asking if they have taken an extension or waiver of this timeline into consideration, but has not yet received a response. Therefore, a waiver or extension cannot be granted at this time.

How can districts notify parents of EL placement during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Districts have options for notifying parents of EL placement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Option 1: Upon review of the HLS, schedule a date and time for the student to take the appropriate WIDA screener and to hold a parent meeting to discuss their child's placement in an EL program. Ensure all parties involved are meetings the guidelines and recommendations for safety and social distancing set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the state and your district.

Option 2: The district and/or parents may choose to schedule these meetings virtually. For virtual meetings, follow the guidance outlined below:

Review the HLS results and student records to determine if the student is eligible and would benefit from EL services. If the district suspects the student should be temporarily placed in an

EL program, conduct a phone or virtual interview with the family to determine if the child would benefit from temporary EL program services. Arrange for interpreting/translating services if needed or requested by the family.

Recommendations for the virtual family interview:

1. To confirm the student's primary home language, verify your interpretation of the completed Home Language Survey is correct.
2. Discuss the potential benefits to their child and supports provided by the EL program. After this discussion, determine with the family if it is in the student's best interest to temporarily enroll the child in the EL program.
3. Discuss all bullet points required on the parent notification under ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act).
4. Make sure the family understands the child will take an English language proficiency screener when regular schooling resumes to determine permanent EL status.
5. Let the family know they have the right to opt out of EL services at any time and to re-enroll their child in the program at any time.

Recommended questions for parent interview provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.

If the parent notification and Program Services Plan (PSP) meeting is conducted by phone or virtual interview, how should districts obtain parent signatures on the PSP and if the parent declines, the waiver to decline services?

Under normal circumstances, KDE recommends that districts get parent signatures on the PSP and waiver to decline services as a form of documentation that the district has met the requirements of ESSA, and informed the parents of the benefits of the EL program and their right to decline or opt into services at any time.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parent PSP meetings may not be able to occur exactly as they did pre-pandemic. Therefore, the parent interview discussed in the previous question is a good opportunity for districts to notify the parent their child has been placed in an EL program, explain the benefits of the EL program and the services offered, and explain the parents' rights to opt into or out of services.

The district will need to keep some form of documentation of the student's placement and results of the parent interview. Once regular in-person schooling resumes and/or when these students can take the WIDA screener for permanent placement, then a PSP meeting would occur and the needed signatures can be obtained.

How should districts report EL status, EL services and EL accommodations in Infinite Campus for students who are attending virtual or remote learning and are placed temporarily in an EL program?

Use the information from student records received from the previous district or state, HLS results and the family interview to report the student's home primary language in Infinite Campus.

For students who cannot be administered a WIDA screener and are placed temporarily, select the student's EL program status in Infinite Campus as "EL." The Identified Date would be the date the student enrolled in school and the HLS was given. EL services and accommodations provided during this time should be entered in IC as normal.

Note: This status may need to be updated once the student takes the appropriate WIDA screener to determine permanent placement.

Maintain a list of newly enrolled ELs that will need to take a WIDA screener to confirm permanent placement.

In the cumulative file and EL folder, make a note that the HLS, family interview and review of available records identified a need for temporary EL program services, and that the student must take an appropriate WIDA screener when in-person schooling resumes.

If the family declines temporary EL program services, make a note that the family is not interested in temporary EL program services and mark the "Parent Declined" indicator in Infinite Campus. However, these students still must take an appropriate WIDA screener. At that time, an updated PSP will be created and permanent placement can be determined.

Will students who are attending school virtually or remotely and are identified for temporary EL placement need to take the WIDA screener?

Yes. Any student identified with a language other than English must be administered the appropriate WIDA screener.

Currently the WIDA online screener and K W-APT cannot be administered remotely.
The WIDA screeners can be administered to students who are attending in-person schooling or to students who are enrolled in virtual learning and whose parents wish to arrange a time for the screener to be administered. The district should work with the families of identified students to determine when a WIDA screener or K W-APT can be administered. If a screener cannot be administered within the federal timeline, then districts should use the temporary placement procedures outlined in this document.

An updated PSP will be created using the WIDA screener results. At that time, a PSP meeting should occur where the revised PSP and EL services are discussed and permanent placement is determined.

Note: EL status, services and accommodations may need to be updated in Infinite Campus based on WIDA screener and PSP meeting results.

Will students who enrolled and were temporarily placed in an EL program during the 2019-2020 school year emergency NTI period need to take the WIDA screener?

Yes. Any student who enrolled during the emergency NTI period and was temporarily placed in an EL program and was not able to take the WIDA screener must do so when applicable and according to the guidance provided in this document. The student's EL record and PSP will need to be updated to reflect the actual screener scores. If the student is deemed Initially Fluent English Proficient and not eligible for English learner programs, the student's EL program status in Infinite Campus should be updated to "Not-EL" and the Identified Date removed. The EL services and accommodations would be end-dated as of the date the WIDA screener was administered.

How should districts develop a PSP without WIDA screener results during the emergency NTI period?

A temporary EL PSP can be developed using the information gathered from the family interview and available records such as the student's assessment history and transcripts. Once the temporary PSP is created, EL services can begin to be provided remotely.

How can districts provide appropriate language services to ELs remotely during the emergency NTI period?

Although there are several websites and apps that can be used to supplement language learning, none should be used in place of language instruction from a licensed teacher. Districts should review and revise their current language instruction educational program (LIEP) in order to provide EL services through online platforms and virtual learning environments.

Districts should ensure EL students have internet access to online learning platforms and academic content. Districts may provide technology devices in the home for ELs and to allow their families to participate and communicate meaningfully in their child's education.

Some examples of instructional methods teachers may use are:
1. Digitally recording lessons and/or using virtual learning environments to provide live instruction with language support to EL students as a group or one-on-one.
2. Implement methods to promote person-to-person communication and social interaction through digital storytelling activities, phone conversations, etc.
3. EL teachers are encouraged to collaborate with content-area teachers to make accommodations for the needs of ELs.

4. Examples of additional methods of instruction could include providing printed materials, video or telephone conferencing and online learning software.

Examples of instruction that require basic or no technology:

1. Journal entries about students' daily activities and/or specific observations where students have the option to write either in their native language or English.
2. Reading logs where students read books that interest them, then have the option to write in their native language or English.
3. Recommend TV shows appropriate for students' ages and academic levels and have students turn on subtitles so they can hear and see the language as people are speaking.
4. Design learning packets that could be mailed home. These learning packets would provide assignments that meet academic content standards and language proficiency standards with accommodations based on the student's level of proficiency.

   Source: ["Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners"](#) from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Districts and schools must utilize interpreters or translation services for communication with families when needed. It is important to remain flexible and supportive to EL students and their families during this unprecedented time.

For a list of supplemental online resources, see the [English Learner Spring 2020](#) newsletter on the [KDE English Learner webpage](#).

Will EL students who obtained English Language Proficiency on the 2020 [ACCESS for ELLs](#) during the emergency NTI period of the 2019-2020 school year be able to exit the EL program?

Yes. Since Kentucky's ACCESS testing window closed before school closures began, this process has not been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Score reports are available for districts to review in WIDA Assessment Management System (AMS) and districts can use those results to identify students who met the exiting criteria.

The status in Infinite Campus will reflect "Exit-EL" and the exit date should reflect 6/30/2020. All end dates for EL services and accommodations in Infinite Campus should reflect 6/30/2020.

Are districts still required to provide equitable services to ELs in participating private schools during the emergency NTI period?

Yes. Decisions on services provided must be determined in consultation with the participating private school.

More Information

More information may be forthcoming from the U.S. Department of Education. The Kentucky Department of Education will update guidance as needed to keep districts informed. For questions about EL programs not answered here, email Jessica Sanderson or Erin Sudduth or call (502) 564-3791.

For updates and information about KDE's response to COVID-19, refer to KDE's COVID-19 webpage.

Visit the WIDA website for WIDA COVID-19 response and updates and resources for Distance Teaching and Learning.

Works Consulted
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Educational Resources for Students and Families"
- Minnesota Department of Education, "Student Instruction COVID-19 Resources"
- U.S. Department of Education, "Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents"
- U.S. Department of Education, "Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)"
- WIDA COVID-19 response and updates and resources for Distance Teaching and Learning

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