



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 7, 2020 (*Update to [May 7, 2020 Broadcast memo](#)*)
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: District Bilingual/ESL/ELS Leads, NJSMART Point of Contact
From: Peggy McDonald, Ed. D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services

Identification, Provisional Screener and Parent Notification of ELLs during COVID-19: Fall 2020 Update

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to announce that the WIDA Remote Screener, a paper-based screening tool, is now available for school districts beginning in fall 2020 to formally identify students as eligible for services as an English language learner (ELL). The Remote Screener will allow school districts to complete all required steps in the identification process for students informally identified in the spring, as well as new students, to ensure that English language learners receive the services to which they are entitled.

Identification of Newly Enrolled ELLs

NJDOE's [Broadcast memo](#) of May 7, 2020 indicated that all newly enrolled students in a school district must be:

1. Given a [Home Language Survey](#) (HLS);
2. Evaluated for language services if the Home Language Survey indicates the need for testing; and
3. Provided with a language instructional educational program (LIEP), if identified.

The May 7 memo also indicated that upon return to school, students must be formally screened as part of the identification process. *The WIDA Remote Screener is now available for that formal screening process.* If a student is identified, the identification date should be entered in NJSMART in the `ELLIdentificationDate` field consistent with the definition of the data element in the SID Handbook, p. 64.

The WIDA Remote Screener was made available on the [WIDA website](#) on July 16, 2020 and will be visible to all people who have WIDA Screener or K W-APT permissions. The ACCESS District Test Coordinator (DTC) can assign permissions on WIDA AMS, as necessary. The WIDA Remote Screener:

- Is available for Grades K-1 (Grades 2-12 Remote Screener launches August 2020);
- Is designed to test oral language only; and
- Takes approximately 10 minutes to administer.

In the absence of being able to administer the WIDA Remote Screener, or any other state-approved language proficiency screener this fall, the district's certified language specialist should continue to take the following steps to identify a student who may need an LIEP:

1. Interview parents and student(s) in person, by telephone or virtually, consistent with the district's reopening plan, if feasible, when a language other than English is indicated;
2. Review past school records, if available, including past state test scores or district administered assessments;
3. Assign an "informal" designation of ELL, if applicable (*Do not enter data into NJSMART in the `ELLIdentificationDate` field*); and
4. Provide a LIEP (e.g., ESL) consistent with a district's reopening plan and administer the screener as soon as feasible.

Parent Notification

Title I Parental Notification requirements, such as why a child is identified as an ELL and why a child needs to be placed in a language instructional educational program, still are in effect for the 2020-2021 school year during remote, hybrid or in-person instruction. Consequently, schools using Title I, Part A or Title III, Part A funds, no later than thirty (30) days after the beginning of the school year, must inform the parent or parents of an English language learner (ELL) student that their child has been identified for participation in a language instructional educational program. Given the mandated school closures during COVID-19, some elements of the [parental notification requirements](#) may be provided to parents in a slightly different format. For example, the child's level of English proficiency, and how such level was assessed, for identification or exiting will indicate an observation of language proficiency versus an actual test score.

Contact information

If you have questions, contact the NJDOE's Office of Supplemental Educational Programs at ELL@doe.nj.gov. We look forward to our continued partnership to support New Jersey's ELLs.

c: Members, State Board of Education
Kevin Dehmer, Interim Commissioner of Education
NJDOE Staff
New Jersey Teachers of English of Other Languages/Bilingual Education
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group