

Maine Department of Education English Learner Identification Procedures During Periods of Extended Remote Learning Due to COVID-19

This procedure provides a means for school administrative units (SAUs) to provisionally identify English learners (ELs) during the time that schools are engaged in remote learning due to COVID-19 and face-to-face screening is not possible. This process may not replace the formal identification process when face-to-face screening is possible, and formal screening must take place as soon as possible once school resumes face-to-face operations for any student who has been given a provisional status. Note that this procedure is subject to change upon updated guidance from the US Department of Education.

The Maine Department of Education thanks the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for graciously allowing us to adapt and utilize the guidance it created.

[Step 1: Administer the Language Use Survey \(LUS\) to all students enrolling in a given Maine SAU for the first time.](#)

[Step 2: Conduct an interview remotely with the student \(via phone, Skype, Zoom, etc.\) when the answer to any of the questions on the LUS is a language other than English. Follow the procedures below and complete the speaking, listening, and interaction rubrics in the appendix.](#)

[Step 3: Determine whether the student might be an EL using student interview results and make a provisional placement decision.](#)

[Step 4: Notify parents/guardians of screening test results and provisional placement decision.](#)

[Step 5: Do not code the student as an EL in the student data system until the provisional identification has been confirmed with face-to-face screening.](#)

Step 1: Administer the [Language Use Survey \(LUS\)](#) to all students enrolling in a given Maine SAU for the first time.



The primary purpose of the Language Use Survey (LUS) is to find out whether a student has a primary/home language other than English, in which case the student must be assessed for English language proficiency. During extended periods of remote learning due to COVID-19, the LUS can be completed remotely by district-trained enrollment personnel via phone, Skype, Zoom, etc. if it is accessible to both districts and families. However, parent/guardian signature must be collected on the paper LUS kept in the student's cumulative file as soon as normal school operations resume. Parents/guardians can also complete the LUS and mail it to the district. In districts using online

enrollment systems, the LUS may be completed as normal. Note that translation/interpretation services must be provided to parents/guardians who require them in order to enroll their children.

Step 2: Conduct an interview remotely with the student (via phone, Skype, Zoom, etc.) when the answer to any of the questions on the LUS is a language other than English. Follow the procedures below and complete the speaking, listening, and interaction rubrics in the appendix.

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Districts must conduct an interview remotely with every student whose LUS indicates that there is a language other than English spoken at home with the following limited exceptions:

- a student who has already been identified as an EL by another Maine SAU;
- a student who is transferring from another Maine SAU and has already been screened for EL status and scored above the identification threshold ([Maine DOE-required English language proficiency screener](#) score report must be present in student’s cumulative file);
- a student who is transferring from another [WIDA Consortium member state](#) with either of the following present in the student’s cumulative file:
 - a Kindergarten W-APT, Kindergarten MODEL, or WIDA Screener Online score report above the [Maine identification threshold](#)
 - an ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS score above the Maine exit threshold, which is an overall composite proficiency level of 4.5 on ACCESS or level P2 on Alternate ACCESS.

The interview should consist of questions at varying levels of difficulty that are meant to elicit interaction between the interviewer and the student that will make it possible to determine the student’s ability in listening, speaking, and interaction. Interviewers must have strategies in place to ensure students who do not have experience interacting with someone through a screen are comfortable during the interview that is being conducted remotely.

Below are *examples* of questions at various levels of difficulty, but interviewers must tailor the interaction as necessary based on the apparent proficiency level and age of the student.

- Start with questions at low levels of difficulty and progress in difficulty from there.
 - Examples of low-level questions:
 1. “What is your name?”
 2. “How old are you?”
 3. “What do you like to do?”

○ Examples of moderate-level questions:

1. “What do you like at school?”
2. “What kind of food do you like?”
3. “Tell me about your favorite _____ (sports team, video game, toy, or hobby)?”
4. “What would you like to do when you graduate from high school/grow up?”

○ Examples of high-level questions:

1. “What is your favorite subject in school and why?”
2. “Pretend you are trying to convince me why I should like your favorite _____ (sports team, video game, toy, or hobby).”
3. “Describe your favorite _____ (teacher, friend, or family member) for me.”
4. “Describe a job that you think is useful for society and why.”

- Stop at the level where a student has difficulty responding.
- If the student has difficulty responding at a particular level, then ask a question or two from the previous level to end on a positive note.
- Complete the speaking, listening and interaction domains rubrics in the [appendix](#).

NOTE: If a student is unable to complete the interview process (e.g., because of a disability, no previous exposure to English, or refusal to participate), then the determination of EL status must be made based on the remaining available evidence gathered from the LUS, parent/guardian interview, and academic records review. If reasonable evidence of English proficiency cannot be established based on those sources along with the incomplete screener results, if any, then the student should be provisionally identified as an EL until screening can be completed.

Generally, a student who easily communicates at a high level is NOT likely to qualify for EL status.

ATTENTION:

- 1- **Regardless of whether a student is provisionally identified as an EL or not, the formal identification process, including face-to-face screening, must be completed once school resumes. This includes students who were not provisionally identified.**
- 2- **The district must ensure that students who are given a provisional status assignment (identified as EL or non-EL) are tracked by some means (e.g. a special code in the local student management system) so that once school resumes, they are screened according to the full procedure.**
- 3- **Students are not coded as ELs in Synergy (state student data system) before they are screened according to the full procedure.**

Step 3: Determine whether the student might be an EL using student interview results and make a provisional placement decision.

Districts must make a **provisional** determination about the most appropriate academic placement and supports based on the student’s approximate English language proficiency. **Utilizing the rubrics below, districts will provisionally identify as an English learner any student who does not score “high” in all areas, or a combined total of 1.5 points.** Districts must also determine the method of instructional delivery to address students’ English language learning needs and to give them the opportunity to participate meaningfully and equitably in the district’s educational program. Consistent with federal and state civil rights laws, school districts must continue to provide services to ELs, consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

Step 4: Notify parents/guardians of screening test results and provisional placement decision.

Districts must provide the parent/guardian with a description of the **provisional** placement and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services that will be made available for their children.

Once schools have reopened for normal operations, districts will send the information that needs to be communicated to all parents/guardians of ELs after a student is identified as an EL based on the results of a face-to-face administration of an English language proficiency screener.

Step 5: Do not code the student as an EL in the student data system until the provisional identification has been confirmed with face-to-face screening.

As noted earlier, students should **NOT** be coded as ELs in the local or state student data system (Synergy) before they are screened according to the full procedure described in the [Maine Identification and Placement Guidance](#). However, SAUs should track provisionally identified ELs in some manner so they can be screened for official identification once face-to-face instruction resumes.

Appendix

Grade: Kindergarten

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using some content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	
TOTAL				

Grade: 1

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using some content-specific vocabulary.	
TOTAL				

Grades 2-3

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Observation Date(s):

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics with little to no content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms and some content-specific vocabulary about familiar and academic topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, expanded discourse about a familiar or academic topic using content-specific vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/>	
			TOTAL	

Grades: 4-12

Rubric 1 - Interaction, Listening, and Speaking Language Use Inventory

Student:

Evaluator's Name:

Interview Date(s):

	LOW (0)	MODERATE (.3)	HIGH (.5)	Value
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can connect phrases to talk about familiar topics using simple sentences. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for reactions, opinions, and plans. <input type="checkbox"/>	Can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating subthemes, developing particular points, and finishing with an appropriate conclusion. <input type="checkbox"/>	
			TOTAL	