

ESOL NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026

Welcome Back to School

As the 2026–2027 school year begins, the Maine Department of Education is pleased to share new and updated resources to support School Administrative Units (SAUs) in their work with multilingual learners and their families. The beginning of the school year provides an opportunity to review systems, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish consistent practices that support effective multilingual learner identification, programming, assessment, and language access.

This issue highlights new resources, assessment updates, and professional learning opportunities to support implementation of Maine’s multilingual learner requirements and inform practice throughout the school year. For ongoing access to guidance, tools, assessment information, and professional learning opportunities, visit Maine Department of Education’s [Multilingual Learners](#).

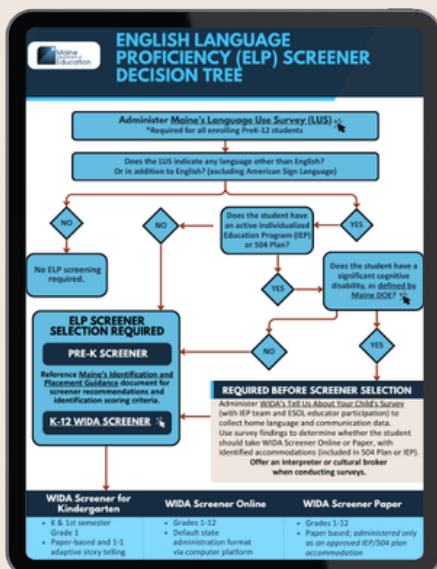
We are also excited to celebrate Tori Lands, a K–12 multilingual learner teacher for Mt. Blue Regional School District and a part-time ESOL lecturer at the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), on her selection as a 2026–2027 WIDA Fellow. Congratulations, Tori! Read more about Tori and this year’s [WIDA Fellows cohort](#).

Please reach out to the Maine DOE team with questions, requests for technical assistance, or feedback as you navigate the year ahead. The DOE is committed to partnering with SAUs to strengthen multilingual learner programming statewide.

With gratitude,

Jane Armstrong, ESOL State Specialist

NEW: English Language Proficiency (ELP) Screener Decision Tree



Use this decision tree to guide consistent administration of Maine’s required English language proficiency screening process. It helps school teams determine the appropriate screener and next steps based on student grade level and individual circumstances, supporting accurate multilingual learner (ML) identification and placement.

Linked Resources within ELP Screener Decision Tree

- [Maine’s Language Use Survey](#)
- [Maine’s Multilingual Learner Identification and Placement Guidance](#) (updated annually)
- [WIDA Screener Checklist: Requirements & Resources](#)
- [WIDA’s Tell Us About Your Child Survey](#)

For more information, visit DOE webpage: [Multilingual Learner Identification](#)





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WIDA's Tell Us About Your Child Survey is now a required step in the identification and screening process for students enrolling with significant cognitive disabilities.

WIDA's Tell Us About Your Child Survey (TUAYCS) is an eight-item survey designed to be completed by parents or guardians of students who have already met the following criteria:

- **Have an IEP**
- **Are identified as having a significant cognitive disability**
- **Are determined to be potential MLs through a home language survey**

The survey focuses on the student's *use of their home language, use of English, and their communication abilities*. This survey is designed to assist educators in differentiating between language and communication, recognizing that each student has unique communication needs. By understanding how a student communicates at home, teachers can effectively personalize instructional strategies, accommodations, and assistive technologies to support student success.

Visit WIDA to access the User's Guide, translated surveys, and family letters.

<https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/tell-us-about-your-child-survey>

WIDA Tell Us About Your Child: Getting Started

Led by Jane Armstrong, ESOL State Specialist

Join colleagues from across Maine for an introductory session on WIDA's new *Tell Us About Your Child Survey* and User's Guide. This session will provide an overview of the resource, guidance from Maine DOE specialists, and an opportunity to ask questions, explore initial implementation considerations, and build a shared understanding to support thoughtful, consistent implementation across Maine.

JOIN NOW

**Monday,
September 14, 2026
3:30-4:30 p.m.**

Click to Register or Use QR code



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Assessment Updates & Resources

English Language Proficiency Assessments for Multilingual Learners



Maine's WIDA ACCESS Testing Dates

11/19/26 - 2/26/27	WIDA AMS Test Setup Available for Registrations
12/10/26 - 12/11/26	Districts Receive Test Materials
12/11/26 - 2/22/27	Additional Test Material Ordering Window in WIDA AMS
1/4/27 - 2/26/27	Test Window
3/9/27	Deadline for Shipping Completed Test Materials to DRC - Postmark date
4/28/27	Districts Receive ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Reports and Data - Posted in WIDA AMS
5/14/27 - 5/17/27	Districts Receive Printed ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Reports
6/10/27	Updated ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Data - Posted in WIDA AMS for SEA and Districts

Bookmark these websites

- [English Language Proficiency Assessments | Department of Education](#)
- ★ Including [Maine DOE Scribing Protocol for WIDA ACCESS](#)
- [Maine WIDA State Page](#)



Please contact Mechelle Ganglfinger, DOE English Language Proficiency (ELP) & Alternate Assessment Coordinator

Mechelle.Ganglfinger@maine.gov

DOE Assessment Resources

2026-2027 Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MECAS) Guidelines

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) Assessment Team developed this resource to provide educators and administrators with guidance on Maine's assessment and participation requirements, including Maine Educational Assessments (MEA), English Language Proficiency (WIDA Alternate ACCESS), and Appendix A: Multilingual Learner Exceptions Guidance.

For more information, visit https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/supports

2026-2027 English Language Proficiency Assessment Timeline: WIDA ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS

For more on ELP training requirements, accommodations, and special forms, visit https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/materials/access



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Maine DOE Back to School Backpack for Administrators

Everything you need to start the year strong, organized by the Maine DOE offices and teams that support schools across Maine. Search for a topic or browse by category — look for the New tags to see what changed for 2026–27.

[Back to School Backpack for Administrators | Department of Education](#)

Multilingual Programming Guidance Resources



Multilingual Programming Guidance

3

INDIVIDUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PLAN COMPANION GUIDE



An Individual Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) is a required, school-based document
written after the school teacher identifies a student as a multilingual learner.
Updated August 2024

NEW FOR 26–27

Individual Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP)

The ILAP documents each multilingual learner's language development goals, instructional supports, and progress monitoring. Use these resources to build, implement, and review ILAPs across your SAU, supporting shared responsibility, coordinated language development, and meaningful access to grade-level learning.

[ILAP Companion Guide](#)

[ILAP Template](#)

NEW

Effective multilingual learner (ML) programming is grounded in collaboration, transparency, and shared responsibility. *Maine's 2025-2026 Teacher Leader Fellows, Rebecca Carey and Melissa Frans, designed and developed these new Individual Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) resources to support required documentation and strengthen collaboration among educators, families, and support staff.*

Alongside a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), these resources help School Administrative Units (SAUs) coordinate supports and ensure MLs have equitable access to grade-level learning and meaningful language development opportunities.



Visit the DOE's website to access these resources and essential information specific to Multilingual Programming Requirements and Guidance

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/index.php/learning/multilinguallearner/services>



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What's New with WIDA Assessments for 2026–2027?

WIDA has released important updates for the 2026–2027 school year. Maine educators and assessment coordinators should be aware of several changes that may affect assessment administration, accessibility, training, and interpretation of ACCESS results.

Highlights include:

- New accessibility accommodations: Assistive Technology (AT) and Speech-to-Text (STT) are now available for WIDA Screener Online and WIDA ACCESS Online.
- Updated online testing experience: Students taking ACCESS Online and WIDA Screener Online will now select the Play button to begin audio rather than having audio play automatically.
- ACCESS standard setting: Following the 2026 standard-setting process, WIDA will provide new resources in fall 2026 and spring 2027 to help educators and families understand the impact on 2027 ACCESS scores.
- New ACCESS Braille training: All ACCESS Braille test administrators must complete the new WIDA ACCESS Braille: Administration course and certification quiz before administering the assessment.
- ACCESS Paper audio: Listening and Speaking audio will now be streamed through WIDA AMS by default, eliminating the need for CDs in most cases.
- WIDA Screener large-print materials: Large-print versions of WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and WIDA Screener Paper are now available for purchase.



What to know: 
WIDA assessments in the
2026-2027 school year | WIDA

New WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual

Find all the available accessibility supports and accommodations for WIDA Screener and WIDA ACCESS in the [WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#). Decision-making teams should use the manual, along with state-specific policies, to determine what accommodations are appropriate for each student.

Join WIDA and DRC to learn about the following topics:

- Welcome Back: What's New in 2026-2027? Tuesday, September 1 at 1:00 p.m. CT
- WIDA ACCESS for New Test Administrators Tuesday, September 8 at 1:00 p.m. CT
- WIDA ACCESS for New District Test Coordinators Thursday, September 10 at 1:00 p.m. CT
- Ordering WIDA ACCESS Materials in WIDA AMS Tuesday, September 22 at 1:00 p.m. CT
- WIDA ACCESS Software Updates and Tech Readiness Checklist Tuesday, September 29 at 1:00 p.m. CT

Learn more and add these upcoming webinars to your calendar on the [Webinars](#) page (login required).

WIDA Assessment Webinars typically take an hour.



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WIDA Professional Learning Offerings



The *WIDA Core Learning Collection* brings together self-paced workshops, on-demand videos, and professional learning resources in one centralized collection. Educators in WIDA Consortium states, territories, and federal agencies have free, unlimited access with no prerequisites beginning September 1, 2026, through the WIDA Secure Portal.



The collection includes:

- 13 WIDA Self-Paced Workshops
- **7 On-Demand Videos released throughout the year**
- Resources aligned to WIDA frameworks, assessments, and instructional practices

WIDA Self-Paced Workshops 2026-2027

- Developing Language for Learning in Mathematics
- Engaging Multilingual Learners in Science: Making Sense of Phenomena
- Exploring the WIDA PreK-3 Essential Actions
- Let's Play! Multilingual Children's Joyful Learning in PreK-3
- Making Language Visible in the Classroom
- Newcomers: Promoting Success through Strengthening Practice
- Reading Comprehension Across Content Areas with Multilingual Learners
- Reframing Education for Long-term English Learners
- **NEW!** *Supporting Multilingual Learners with Disabilities in Language and Communication*
- Teaching Multilingual Learners Social Studies through Multiple Perspectives
- The WIDA ELD Standards Framework: A Collaborative Approach

What to know: 
WIDA Core
Learning
Collection | WIDA



How do I access WIDA assessment training manuals, resources & professional learning modules?

To obtain a new login or get assistance with your account, contact help@wida.wisc.edu, call (866) 276-7735, or contact your District Test Coordinator.

WIDA Secure Portal to Create Login Account

Use the WIDA Secure Portal to access test training manuals and resources, as well as Online Professional Learning modules.

REMINDER!

Annual WIDA ACCESS recertification is now required for all Test Administrators to ensure they follow current procedures and maintain assessment consistency, security, and scoring reliability. *Test Administrators must complete all applicable trainings in the WIDA Secure Portal under the Assessment Training tab before administering WIDA ACCESS and WIDA Screener, K-12.*





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Professional Learning Offerings



Writing with Multilingual Learners in the Elementary Grades

2-day in-person workshop | 35 Participants Maximum

October 20 and 21, 2026 8:30-3:30 p.m.
DHHS Building, 109 Capital Street, Augusta

Audience: This workshop is designed for school-based teams including elementary grade-level teachers, English language development specialists, Special Education specialists, and instructional strategists/building leaders.

Description: Writing is more than a product—it is a tool for learning, connection, and advocacy. Join this interactive 2-day workshop to explore how intentional, language-focused instruction and the Teaching and Learning Cycle can support multilingual learners in developing the skills and confidence to write effectively across content areas and audiences.

Participants will explore how to:

- Build content-area background knowledge with the whole class so that students are equipped to write knowledgeably about the topic
- Examine the language of mentor texts with students in order to unpack highly valued ways of using language in a specific genre
- Jointly construct a text with students based on what was learned from those mentor texts
- Support students as they apply their learning about language choices in a target genre to their independent writing
- Engage students in a cycle of review, reflection, and revision to increase the effectiveness of their own writing

Register using the QR code.
Deadline: October 13, 2026



wida.wisc.edu

If you have questions, contact:
Jane.Armstrong@maine.gov

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Register here:

[Writing for Multilingual Learners in the
Elementary Grades- WIDA In Person Workshop](#)



maine.gov/learning/multilinguallearner

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Professional Learning Offerings



Nurturing Speaking Growth

Virtually Facilitated | 2 live webinars + online resources
60 Participants Maximum

October 27, 2026 & November 10, 2026
3:30-5 p.m.

Description

Participants will deepen their understanding of how to intentionally integrate oral language development into daily instruction to increase multilingual learners' access to rigorous, grade-level content and meaningful language use. Participants will be asked to speak and share ideas with colleagues during the webinars.

Audience

This virtual workshop is designed to support all K-12 educators in exploring classroom practices that promote oral language development.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Connect WIDA Key Language Uses to instructional practices in speaking
- Explore the impact of holding the floor for extended classroom discourse
- Choose teacher moves to support student voice and extended discourse
- Develop an ear for language to support precision decisions

Register using the QR code.
Deadline: October 20, 2026

If you have questions, contact:
Jane.Armstrong@maine.gov



wida.wisc.edu



Register here:

[Nurturing Speaking Growth- WIDA Virtual Workshop](#)





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NNETESOL
Northern New England TESOL
Vermont, New Hampshire & Maine

To register and learn more about NNETESOL,
visit <https://www.nnetesol.org/>

or click the link below:

[Northern New England TESOL - 2026 Conference](#)



MEENOO RAMÍ
Author of *Thrive* & *A Teacher's Guide to Using AI*

ON SATURDAY, 24
OCT 2026

A DAY OF



CONCURRENT
SESSIONS



NETWORKING



INSPIRATIONAL
KEYNOTE



VENDORS



USM
PORTLAND

08 AM - 04 PM

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY: Night Before Mixer & Special Exhibit



Osher Map Library

Smith Center for Cartographic Education

We are so grateful to our friends at the Osher Map Library for sponsoring and hosting our pre-conference event!!!

Please join us Friday evening, October 23rd, for a pre-conference reception at USM's Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education. Conference participants are invited to join us at the Osher Map Library (314 Forest Avenue) from 4pm-6pm, for appetizers and drinks (cash bar), tours of their current exhibition "Visceral Cartography: Projects on Colonialism, Conflict, and Culture," and chat with OML educators using maps in TESOL classrooms at the K-12 and University level.

Maine DOE Event Calendar & Professional Learning Opportunities

Check out what the Maine DOE has to offer!
Visit [Event Calendar | Department of Education](#)

✓ [Maine DOE EngageMEnt Series](#)

- o Fall In-Person Session (October 9, 2026) at UMaine Orono
- o Winter Virtual Follow-Up Learning Experience
- o Spring In-Person Session (March 19, 2027) at USM

Cultivating Brilliance:

Maximizing Multilingual Assets and Accelerating Literacy Outcomes in an Integrated MTSS Framework
with Jane Armstrong, State ESOL Specialist, and Bryan Lescord, State MTSS Specialist

Bring your multidisciplinary team to learn asset-based approaches that support multilingual learners within an integrated MTSS framework



maine.gov/learning/multilinguallearner