WIDA™

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs
Interpretive Guide for Score Reports
Grades 1–12
SPRING 2021

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT SCORES

Contents

This document helps educators understand what students' Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores mean and what to do with that information. It also introduces some of the tools available to program coordinators and district administrators interested in reviewing and taking action on group performance on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

This document presents WIDA recommendations for interpreting and using test scores. State and district policies on test score use differ from each other and may vary from the recommendations presented in this document.

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 requires that all students identified as English language learners (ELLs), including those who receive special education services, be assessed annually for English language proficiency. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 also mandates that students with disabilities participate in state and district assessment programs, including alternate assessments, with any accommodations documented in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Alternate ACCESS for ELLs meets federal accountability requirements and provides educators with a measure of the English language proficiency growth of ELLs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a suite of large-scale English language proficiency tests for grade 1–12 students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is one component of WIDA's comprehensive, standards-driven system that supports the teaching and learning of English language learners (ELLs). The purpose of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is to monitor student progress in English language proficiency on a yearly basis and to serve as just one of the many criteria that educators consider as they determine whether English learners have attained an English language proficiency level that will allow them to meaningfully participate in English language classroom instruction. Visit wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access for detail on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a standards-referenced test, which means that student performance is compared to English language development standards WIDA has defined. Any student can achieve any score, and students are not ranked against each other or against the expected performance of monolingual English speakers. **Visit wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards for detail on WIDA standards.**

> The WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition will be the basis of future test development. However, all tests available in the 2020–2021 school year were based on the 2012 standards.

Understanding Scores

Before diving into your students' score reports, take some time to familiarize yourself with the sample reports on the Alternate ACCESS Scores and Reports page of the WIDA website and consider what test scores mean in practical terms. As you examine and discuss the English language proficiency profile that each Individual Student Report shows, use WIDA resources to help you move from scores to concrete recommendations for the services, instructional support, and future assessment needs of each student.

Consider holding an in-service session for your school or district so that educators can talk through the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, review sample score reports, and discuss how students' scores might inform plans for classroom instruction and support.
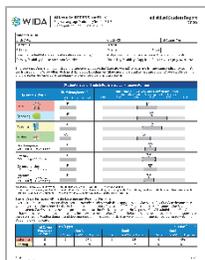
WIDA offers a variety of professional development resources that can help educators and administrators fully understand and make the best use of WIDA assessments. Check out the current professional learning offerings and the webinars available in the Secure Portal Download Library.

> **Don't keep Alternate ACCESS for ELLs information to yourself!** Scores can help parents or guardians, IEP teams, and other educators better understand a student's abilities. Find resources for sharing scores on the Family Engagement page of the WIDA website.

Use the WIDA resources like the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Speaking and Writing Rubrics to identify and describe the language abilities a student already has, the skills a student can work on, and the instructional supports that might be effective as a student develops new language abilities. Share the profile and plans you develop with your students' IEP teams and content teachers. Translate your plans into the student's home language and share them with the student's family during conferences, family nights, or home visits so that home can be a place of active language learning.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Score Reports

Individual Student Report

Audience: Students, Parents and Guardians, Teachers, IEP Teams

Detailed report of a single student's performance, including proficiency level and scale scores for each language domain and four composite areas. Share with students to set language goals. Share with parents and guardians as part of discussions around student progress and achievement. Share with the student's teachers to inform individualized classroom instruction and assessment. Share with IEP teams when determining the student's abilities and needs.

> **Translations of the Individual Student Report are available in the following languages in WIDA AMS.**
>
> Albanian, Amharic, Arabic (MSA), Bengali, Bosnian, Burmese, Chamorro, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Chuukese, French (European), German, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hawaiian, Hindi, Hmong, Ilokano, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Lao, Malayalam, Mandingo, Marshallese, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Somali, Spanish (International), Swahili, Tagalog, Telugu, Tongan, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Wolof
>
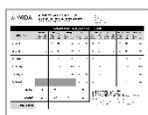> **Translated reports should always accompany—not replace!—official reports in English.**

Student Roster Report

Audience: Teachers, Program Coordinators and Directors, Administrators

Overview report of the performances of a group of students, including proficiency level and scale scores for each language domain and composite area by school, grade, student, and grade-level cluster. Share with administrators, teachers, and IEP teams to inform classroom instruction and assessment.

Frequency Report

High-level report for a single grade within a school, district, or state on the number and percentage of tested students that achieved each proficiency level for each language domain and composite area.

School Frequency Report

Audience: Program Coordinators and Directors, Administrators

Share with school and district staff to inform school-level programmatic decisions.

District Frequency Report

Audience: Program Coordinators and Directors, Administrators, Boards of Education

Share with district staff to inform district-level programmatic decisions.

State Frequency Report

Audience: Boards of Education, State Assessment and Title III Personnel

Share with state staff to inform state- and district-level programmatic decisions.

> **View sample reports at wida.wisc.edu/assess/alt-access/scores-reports.**
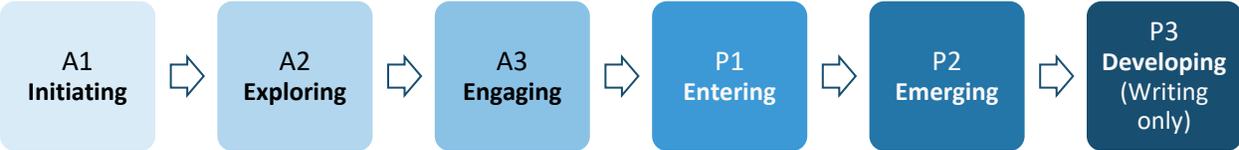
Individual Student Scores

Domain Scores

The Individual Student Report contains detailed information about a student's performance on each section of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. It is primarily for students, parents or guardians, teachers, and IEP teams. It provides a snapshot of how well the student understands and can produce the language needed to access the academic content presented in an English language classroom. The Individual Student Report shows a proficiency level and a scale score for each of the four language domains.

Language Domain	Proficiency Level** A1 A2 A3 P1 P2 (P3)	Scale Score (Possible 910-960) and Confidence Band See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions 910 920 930 940 950 960
Listening	A1	920
Speaking	A2	925
Reading	A3	930
Writing	P1	935

Proficiency levels are interpretive scores. In other words, they are based on, but separate from, the student's earned test score (see Listening and Reading Scores below for detail). The proficiency level score describes the student's performance in terms of the six WIDA Alternate English Language Proficiency Levels:

A1 Initiating	⇨	A2 Exploring	⇨	A3 Engaging	⇨	P1 Entering	⇨	P2 Emerging	⇨	P3 Developing (Writing only)

> **Alternate ACCESS for ELLs proficiency levels are unique.** A student who scores a P1 on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is not necessarily performing at the same level as a student who scores at the Entering proficiency level on ACCESS for ELLs Online or ACCESS for ELLs Paper.

At the end of the Individual Student Report, each proficiency level is explained in terms of what the student can do using English. A complete list of these proficiency level descriptors is included in this document. These descriptions reflect the language acquisition process at each level, including students' growing ability to produce and process an increasing variety of language forms and conventions.

Take care when comparing proficiency level scores across grades. A second grader with a P1 in Listening and an A3 in Speaking is demonstrating more developed listening skills than speaking skills. However, proficiency levels are relevant to the context of a particular grade level. A second grader with a P1 in Listening and an eighth grader with a P1 in Listening are exposed to very different, grade-level appropriate content as they test. While their score reports reflect the same proficiency level, the eighth grader is demonstrating more skill by responding to more challenging content.

Use proficiency levels…

… to make comparisons across domains.

… to develop a student-specific English language skill profile.

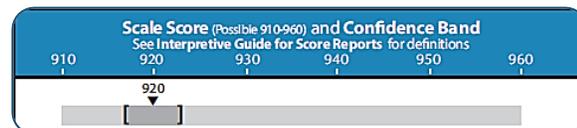… as one of multiple criteria to determine a student's eligibility for English language support services.

Use scale scores…

… to monitor student growth over time within a domain, but not across domains. A scale score of 931 in Reading is not the same as a 931 in Speaking!

Scale scores precisely track student growth over time and across grades. Because scale scores take into account differences in item difficulty, they place all students on a single continuum that stretches from grade 1 through grade 12.

In addition, scale scores allow you to compare student performance across grades, within each domain, with more granularity than you'll see with proficiency levels. For example, using scale scores, you can track how much a student's listening ability increases from sixth to seventh grade.

A scale score is reported as a single point within a confidence band that shows the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM).

Scale Score (Possible 910-960) and **Confidence Band**
See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions
910   920   930   940   950   960
920

In other words, the box beneath the scale score shows the range of scores a student might receive if that student took the test again and again at a single point in time.

Confidence bands are a reminder that scales scores represent just one point in a range of potential student performance outcomes. Consider, for example, these scenarios:

1) The student is healthy and well rested. The testing session goes smoothly.

2) The student isn't feeling well. The testing session goes smoothly.

3) The student is healthy and well rested. The testing session is repeatedly interrupted by loud noises in the room next door.

Even though the student is the same, has the same proficiency level, and responds to the same test questions in all three scenarios, she is most likely to achieve the highest score in the first scenario. Because Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a statistically reliable assessment, the scores in each scenario would be similar—but probably not exactly the same. The confidence band reflects the expected score variation.

To use scores for instructional planning, consult the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Speaking and Writing Rubrics, which detail the types of spoken and written language expected of students at each proficiency level. For example, you can use these rubrics to see that one characteristic of students at Speaking A2—Exploring is "single words or syllables of single words." Students at this proficiency level might benefit from classroom activities which focus on combining words to increase meaning, such as moving from "go" to "I go" or "you go."

Find WIDA rubrics at wida.wisc.edu/resources?keys=rubrics**.**

Composite Scores

In addition to proficiency level and scale scores for each language domain, students receive a proficiency level score and a scale score for different combinations of the language domains. These composite scores are Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall.

Language Do...	Proficiency Level**	Scale Score (Possible 910-960) and Confidence Band
...ng		
Writ...		
Oral Language 50% Listening + 50% Speaking		
Literacy 50% Reading + 50% Writing	P3	955
Comprehension 70% Reading + 30% Listening	A2	940
Overall* 35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking	P1	945

> **Proficiency levels are always calculated from scale scores.** A Literacy proficiency level, for example, is based on the Literacy scale score. The Literacy proficiency level doesn't reflect the midpoint between the student's proficiency level scores in the Reading and Writing domains.

> **Composite scores demand careful consideration.** Composite scores can helpfully summarize student skills. However, similar composite scores can detract from critical differences between students. For example, two students with identical Overall scores might have very different profiles in terms of their oral language and literacy development as well as their disabilities. One student might have very strong speaking skills, while another might excel at reading. Because a high score in one language domain can inflate a composite score, a student's individual performance in each domain is more informative than a single composite score.

Only students who complete all four domains receive all four composite scores. If a student does not complete a particular domain, scores for that domain and any associated composite scores will be missing from the student's score report.

The letters NA appear on the Individual Student score report when information recorded on a test booklet or entered in WIDA AMS specifies that a particular domain test should not be scored. When NA appears for an individual language domain, NA also appears for each composite score calculated using that domain, including the Overall score. For example, when a Do Not Score code is marked for the Reading domain, NA appears for the Reading, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall scores.

Spaces are blank when a test booklet is returned without any evidence that the student engaged with the content of an entire domain test. In other words, the space for a language domain score is blank when no response to any item in that domain test is marked in the test booklet.

Listening and Reading Scores

At the bottom of the first page of the Individual Student Report, a table shows detail about the number of Listening and Reading items that the student answered correctly. These raw scores are not the same as the scale scores reported above.

	# of Correct Responses (out of 9)	Less Support → More Support					
		Cue A		Cue B		Cue C	
		# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses
Listening	5	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%
Reading	3	0		1	33.3%	2	66.6%

The raw scores provide context for the scale scores in that they are a good indicator of how much support the student needed to provide answers. In general, the amount of support a student needs to complete tasks on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs should be reflective of the amount of support that student needs to engage in classroom instruction or other assessments. If raw score data indicate the student needed significantly more or less support than anticipated to engage with Alternate ACCESS for ELLs testing, a reassessment of the student's current support services might be appropriate.

> The scripted cueing system for the Reading and Listening domain tests provides students up to four opportunities to complete each task successfully. For Cue A, the test administrator delivers the initial prompt and question. If needed, Cue A is repeated. For Cue B, the test administrator delivers a simplified version of the initial prompt. For Cue C, the test administrator delivers a simplified version of the prompt, provides an answer to the question, and asks the question again. This test design offers students supported opportunities to demonstrate their developing English language proficiency without the presentation of overly difficult items.

Keep in mind that only scale scores show student progress over time, and only scale scores can be used to compare one student's performance to another's. Scale scores reflect the fact that a student who answers correctly at Cue A demonstrates a higher level of proficiency than a student who answers correctly at Cue C.

Interpreting Student Scores

- Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores provide information on students' English proficiency. They do not measure students' academic achievement or content knowledge, and they do not provide information about a student's disability.

- The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment and score reports are not designed or intended to provide any meaningful information about an individual educator's skills or performance. School- and district-wide trends are more meaningful as a means to evaluate long-term program impacts than as a method to evaluate any one individual or draw conclusions about any particular small group of students.

- WIDA recommends using Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores as one of multiple pieces of information that inform high-stakes reclassification or exit decisions. Schoolwork, in-class assessments, and IEP team input are all valuable evidence that can help you understand a student's English language proficiency and development.

> **State education agencies set reclassification policies, which include determining exit criteria and establishing guidelines for the use of Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores.**

Understanding Student Growth

Both proficiency levels and scale scores can help you understand student growth year over year. Proficiency levels are a practical way to understand students' skills, while scale scores offer more nuance about how much a student's language use and control is changing. As you review Alternate ACCESS for ELLs scores and consider student growth, keep the following information in mind:

- A student's foundation in a home or primary language is a good predictor of English language development. For example, a student with a strong literacy background in a home language is likely to acquire literacy in English at a quicker pace than a student with lower levels of home language literacy.

- The pace of language development is different for each individual. It is common for younger students and those at beginner proficiency levels to make progress more quickly than older students and those at more advanced proficiency levels.

- Students rarely acquire proficiency across domains at the same pace. Often, oral language skills (listening and speaking) develop faster than literacy skills (reading and writing). At the same time, receptive language skills (listening and reading) often develop faster than productive language skills (speaking and writing). Every student's growth is different, but it's not unusual that students need longer to develop skills in Writing than in any other domain.

Multiple consecutive years of data are necessary to analyze student growth.

Consider the first year a student takes Alternate ACCESS for ELLs as an opportunity to establish a baseline of test performance. Results from the second year can show growth, and only with three years or more of test results can you see trends in the student's language development.

Consider 2021 scores carefully.

Many students experienced an unusual 2020–2021 school year due to COVID-19. While the test and the meaning of scores remain the same, many variables could impact how this year's scores relate to previous and subsequent scores. For example, testing schedules and remote learning might affect scores in ways WIDA can't yet analyze.

Group Scores

Student Roster Report

The Student Roster Report contains information on a group of students within a single school and grade. Like the Individual Student Report, the Student Roster Report provides scale scores and proficiency levels for individual language domains and composite areas for each student, giving teachers, administrators, and program coordinators and directors an overview of their students' English language skills and a place to look for patterns in student performance.

Use the Student Roster Report...

... to identify patterns in student performance. Consult with colleagues about factors that might explain similarities and differences in how various groups of students perform.

... to verify that student scores reflect reasonable expectations. For example, you can expect that students new to an English language school context or who have had limited or interrupted formal schooling will be at the lower end of the scale. For students with particularly high scores, consider whether their classroom engagement and schoolwork support this indicator that they might be ready to exit language support programs.

... to group students for instructional planning or classroom support purposes.

... to develop school and district improvement plans or educator professional development opportunities that target the areas in which students are struggling.

Individual Student Report

Proficiency levels
Scale scores
Confidence bands
Proficiency level descriptors

Student Roster Report

Proficiency levels
Scale scores
Multiple students' results

Frequency Reports

Frequency reports provide a snapshot of a particular student population. Available for individual schools, districts, and states, these reports show the number and percentage of students in each grade to attain each proficiency level. In addition, the reports provide the highest and lowest scale scores attained in each of the four language domains. (The individual students who earned these high and low scores are not identified.)

Skills at proficiency level P3—Developing are measured only in the Writing domain on Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, so no information appears in the P3 cells of the Listening, Speaking, and Reading columns.

Administrators, program coordinators and directors, and boards of education can review frequency reports as they plan the type and amount of English language support services their schools, districts, or states will offer. In combination with educator input and the results of content assessments, frequency reports can help high-level decision and policy makers compare the progress and success of ELL students to that of former ELLs and their English-proficient peers.

Frequency reports do not show the performance of individual students. Instead, they show the performance of a group of students using both real numbers of test-takers and percentages of the total test-taker population. Be sure to use both of these numbers as you consider student performance. Percentages are a useful way to compare populations of different sizes. However, a small population size can distort percentage results—knowing that 100% of students achieved a particular proficiency level isn't all that meaningful if the population size is 1.

As with all student achievement reports, keep in mind that context is crucial. When you share frequency reports with decision makers, also provide information about the student population, such as the percentage of students with IEPs or 504 Plans and the variety of backgrounds students bring to your school, district, or state in terms of languages, cultures, and experiences. The frequency report itself cannot explain why students are distributed as they are among the proficiency levels. For example, it's not unusual for a school with many new students or a particularly mobile or linguistically diverse population to have more students at beginning proficiency levels than another school with an equally strong English language support program but a more stable and homogeneous student population.

> **What next?** Now that you're an expert in student score reports, revisit the Understanding Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Scores section of this document for resources that can help you connect test scores to classroom practices!

At each grade level, toward the end of a given alternate level of English language proficiency, and with instructional support...

Level	English language learners with significant cognitive disabilities will produce:	English language learners with significant cognitive disabilities will process:
P3 Developing	• Specific content language, including cognates and expressions • Words or expressions with multiple meanings used across content areas • Repetitive grammatical structures with occasional variation • Sentence patterns across content areas • Short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity • Expanded expression of one idea or emerging expression of multiple ideas	Students may score up to alternate proficiency level P3 in the domain of Writing. The domains of Listening, Speaking, and Reading do not include test items targeting alternate proficiency level P3 and above; therefore, students taking this test cannot demonstrate English language at alternate proficiency level P3 and higher in those domains.
P2 Emerging	• General content words and expressions across content areas • Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas • Formulaic grammatical structures • Repetitive phrasal and sentence patterns across content areas • Phrases or short sentences • Emerging expression of ideas	• General content words and expressions, including cognates • Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas • Compound grammatical constructions • Repetitive phrasal and sentence patterns across content areas • Multiple related simple statements • An idea with details
P1 Entering	• General content-related words • Everyday social and instructional words and expressions • Phrase-level grammatical structures • Phrasal patterns associated with common social and instructional situations • Words, phrases, or chunks of language • Single words used to represent ideas	• General content-related words • Social and instructional words and expressions • Simple grammatical constructions • Common social and instructional forms and patterns • Single statements or questions • An idea within words, phrases, or chunks of language

...within sociocultural contexts for language use.

At each grade level, toward the end of a given alternate level of English language proficiency, and with instructional support...

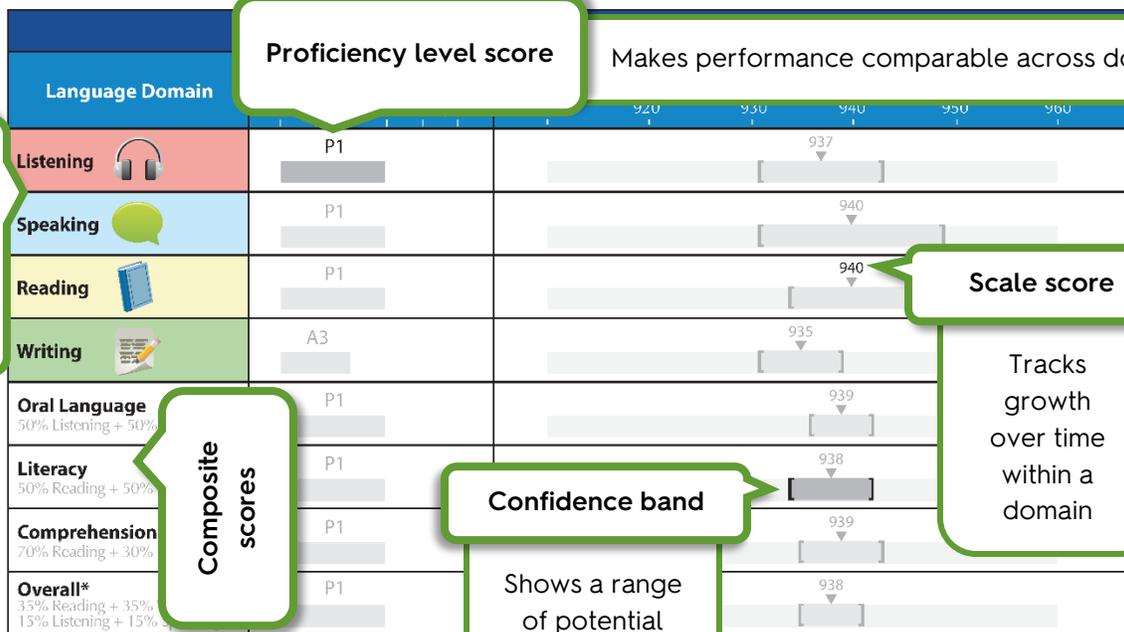| Level	English language learners with significant cognitive disabilities will produce:	English language learners with significant cognitive disabilities will process:
A3 Engaging	- Familiar words associated with daily routine - Representations of sounds, words, or ideas withdrawing symbols, letters, or numbers - Routinely practiced patterns associated with common social and instructional situations - Oral approximations of words or phrases - Symbols or letters to represent ideas	- Symbols, letters, and/or numbers - Spoken social and instructional words and familiar expressions - Routinely practiced social and instructional forms and patterns - Familiar statements or questions associated with daily routine - An idea within visual representations or familiar language
A2 Exploring	- Different sounds and gestures to communicate - Markings or symbols to communicate (e.g., with writing utensil or assistive device) - Approximations of routinely practiced words - Varied tone and inflection to convey needs, desires, or moods (to convey adherence to social norms)	- Routinely practiced oral cues - Familiar visual representations associated with daily routines - Environmental symbols and shapes - Spoken words associated with familiar people, daily routine, and/or environment
A1 Initiating	- Imitations of sounds - Varied body movements to communicate (e.g., eye gaze, grasp writing utensil)	- Familiar voices and communicative sounds - Change in expression (e.g., facial, body, vocal)

...within sociocultural contexts for language use.

WIDA™

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs®
English Language Proficiency Test for ELL Students
with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Individual Student Report

Student: NAME			
Birth Date:		Grade: 02	IEP Status
District ID:		State ID:	
School:		District: State:	
Does the student take any state alternate assessment(s)?:		# of years student has been exposed to academic E	
Primary Disability: Autism Spectrum Disorder		Secondary Disability (if applicable): Speech or Languag	

Student information

This report provides information about the student's scores on the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency test is based on the WIDA Alternate English Language Development Standards and is used to measure students' progress English. Scores are reported as Language Proficiency Levels and as Scale Scores.

Proficiency level score

Makes performance comparable across domains

Domain scores

Language Domain				920	930	940	950	960
Listening 🎧	P1					937		
Speaking 💬	P1					940		
Reading 📘	P1					940		
Writing 📝	A3					935		
Oral Language 50% Listening + 50%	P1					939		
Literacy 50% Reading + 50%	P1					938		
Comprehension 70% Reading + 30%	P1					939		
Overall* 35% Reading + 35% 15% Listening + 15%	P1					938		

Scale score

Tracks growth over time within a domain

Composite scores

Confidence band

Shows a range of potential performance outcomes

*Overall score is calculated only when all four domains have been as
**The Listening, Speaking, and Reading domains do not include test   nd above; therefore, students cannot demonstrate English
   proficiency at levels P3 and higher. However, in Writing, students r

Student's performance within the Listening and Read
Each task in the Listening and Reading domains provides students with three opportunities (Cue A, Cue B, & Cue C) to demonstrate what they can do. Cue A provides the initial prompt and question. If the score for Cue A is Incorrect or No Response, Cue B is administered. Cue B simplifies the initial prompt. If the score for Cue B is Incorrect or No Response, Cue C is administered. Cue C includes the simplified prompt and provides the answer to the question. The table below provides the number of correct responses to the Listening and Reading domains and does not report information on tasks that were not administered, incorrect, or to which the student did not respond.

	# of Correct Responses (out of 9)	Less Support				More Support	
		Cue A		Cue B		Cue C	
		# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses	# Correct	% of Correct Responses
Listening	8	6	67%	2	22%	0	0%
Reading	8	8	89%	0	0%	0	0%

Raw scores

Indicate how much support the student needed to provide answers