

Tift County Schools

ESOL Handbook

2025/2026



Tift County Schools
516 W 12th Street
Tifton, GA 31794

Updated 8-1-26

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Introduction

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a state funded instructional program for eligible English Learners (ELs) in grades K-12 (Georgia School Law Section 20-2-156 Code 1981, Sec. 20-2-156, enacted in 1985). The purpose of the Tift County Schools (TCS) ESOL Program is to ensure that identified K-12 English Learners (ELs) have equitable access to academic content, rigorous instruction, and meaningful opportunities to succeed, while increasing their English language proficiency (ELP). The program is guided by state and federal requirements and emphasizes language development integrated with the Georgia Standards of Excellence. This handbook describes district procedures related to identification, eligibility, placement, instructional services, exit, reclassification, post-exit monitoring, evaluation, and family engagement.

Section I: Identification of English Learners (ELs)

A. Procedures to Identify Potential ELs

1. Home Language Survey (HLS) Questions

Upon initial K-12 enrollment, the enrolling parent or guardian completes the state-mandated [Home Language Survey](#) (HLS). The HLS is available in multiple languages and includes the three standardized questions issued by GaDOE as well as an additional question asking which language parents/guardians prefer to receive school communication in. The questions are presented exactly as written by the GaDOE, without modification, to ensure consistency across Georgia. They are:

- Which language does your child best understand and speak?
- Which language does your child most frequently speak at home?
- Which language do adults in your home most frequently use when speaking with your child?

The form, signed and dated by the parent or guardian, is placed in the student's EL records and uploaded into the district's student information system (SIS) at the end of the school year.

2. Additional Statements from Multilingual (ML) Families

If the parent or guardian reports a multilingual home environment on the HLS, they are asked to provide additional information. This information is used to determine if the student will be screened for English language services. Students who speak *little*

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to *no* English will be screened for ESOL services. Students who speak *only* English, *more* English than the home language, or their home language and English *equally* will not be screened for ESOL services.

3. School Actions Based on HLS Responses

The ESOL teacher uses HLS responses and the [Educator Decision-Making Guide for Home Language Survey Responses](#) to determine if a student will be screened for ESOL services. If the parent indicates that the child and other adults in the home understand and use English and another language, they are asked to provide additional information to decide if the student should be screened. Parents are asked to circle, from the list below, **only one sentence** to best describe the child's primary language.

- My child understands and uses only the home language and **no English.**
- My child understands and uses mostly the home language and **a little English.**
- My child understands and uses the home language and English **equally.**
- My child understands and uses **mostly English** and only a little of the home language.
- My child understands and uses **only English.**

If the parent indicates the student understands and uses English more than the other home language, or equally, the student will *not* be screened for English language proficiency.

4. HLS Incorrect Addendum Procedures

- a. Multilingual (Multiliterate) parents who feel the ELP screening process was inaccurate, may request to change their students' primary language to English. This change must be made within the first year of being identified as EL using the [Multilingual HLS Amendment Form](#). Schools remove the child's EL status classification using the EL = 'I' or 'incorrect' code for the remainder of the school year, and then the EL = 'N' or "no" status the following school year.

5. Staff Training in HLS Procedures

At the beginning of each school year, staff involved in completion of the HLS receive training. Enrollment personnel at the Administrative Offices of TCS will be trained on completion of the HLS at central registration. ESOL teachers participate

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in training for any updates or changes to the HLS process with the ESOL coordinator. At the school level, school administrators, kindergarten teachers, and registrars are trained on the administration of the HLS for students enrolling in Kindergarten for the first time. Training includes targeted audience, correct procedures, case examples, and corrective actions for errors.

6. EL Identification Timeline

In accordance with federal and state law, students who require screening based on HLS responses at the beginning of the school year are assessed, and parents are notified, within 30 calendar days. Eligibility of students enrolling after the start of the school year is determined either through records received from a transferring LEA or through screening. Eligibility must be determined within 30 days from the date of enrollment. Parents are notified of ESOL services within 10 days of verification of eligibility. ESOL staff are trained to initiate this process immediately upon receiving the HLS.

7. Data Collection Elements

Upon completion of the HLS at central registration, the HLS is scanned into the SIS and the original is sent to the ESOL teacher at the assigned school.

B. English Learner Eligibility

1. Overview

Eligibility is based on the combination of HLS responses and ELP screener results. The process is standardized across the district to ensure fairness and consistency.

2. Criteria and Process for Initial EL Eligibility

Once identified as a potential EL, and within 30 days of enrollment, students are screened using the appropriate grade-level cluster of the WIDA Screener or WIDA Alternate Screener. If the screener results meet GaDOE eligibility criteria outlined in the [EL Eligibility Criteria Flowcharts](#), the student is identified as EL=Y. Parents receive written notification of eligibility in English and, when possible, in the home language. After screening, an Initial Referral is completed and shared with the district office. Records are updated in the SIS with all information relating to the screening results for students who are eligible for

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ESOL services. Students are flagged as EL=Y. For students who DNQ, the HLS, screener score report, and initial referral form are uploaded to the SIS and students are flagged EL=N in the SIS.

3. Process for Identifying EL Status of Transfer Students

At the time of enrollment in TCS, information is gathered by Central Registration.

a. In-State Transfers Records are requested from the previous LEA. Every effort should be made to obtain students' prior ELP screening and assessment documentation to confirm EL status within 30 days of enrollment. The students' EL status is reported in the SIS and all transfer-related documents are filed in the students' EL records. Parents are notified of students' initial or continuing EL status and ESOL language program placement and available support services.

b. Out-of-State Transfers When a student transfers from out-of-state, a records request is sent to the previous LEA. Every effort is made to obtain students' initial HLS, ELP screening, and most recent assessment documentation from the previous LEA to confirm EL status. This process must be completed within 30 days of enrollment. If students enroll from a WIDA state and did not qualify (DNQ) as an EL, they *may not* be rescreened in Georgia without prior approval from the state ESOL office. If a student enrolls from a Non-WIDA state and DNQ by that state's criteria, they may be screened *only if* the HLS indicates the students' primary language is not English *and* an initial ELP screener was administered **within the past school year**. When EL students transfer from another state within the U.S. or from a Department of Defense(DOD) school and provide official documentation confirming their EL eligibility and ESOL services within the past year, schools must honor those records and place students in their ESOL program.

c. Additional Student Transfers *J-1 Visa students* are expected to demonstrate sufficient English skills to succeed in high school and function independently in daily school life. If J-1 Visa students do not demonstrate sufficient English proficiency, screening may occur to see if the student qualifies for ESOL services. When *students re-enroll in the US after extended time abroad*, the school must review their EL status **at the time of withdrawal** to determine how to proceed. Follow the guidelines below based on students' EL status at the time of withdrawal.

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1. **Current or active EL (EL = Yes):** Reinstate the same EL status upon re-enrollment in U.S. schools.
2. **Former EL - Years 1 or 2 post-exit (EL = '1' or EL = '2'):** Continue the same monitoring status and closely track academic progress. If students struggle to understand and use academic English, the school may initiate Georgia Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process which may indicate the need to implement the Reverse Reclassification Process (Refer to Section III: Post-Exit Monitoring).
3. **Former EL - Years 3 or 4 post-exit (EL = '3' or EL = '4'):** Consider rescreening if students meet the following criteria:
 - a. Were exited from EL status at an early age, i.e., in elementary grades 2, 3, or 4.
 - b. Completed two years of post-exit monitoring and were making academic progress
 - c. Were schooled in non-English schools abroad for three or more years.
 - d. Are currently enrolled in a grade level with high academic English expectation.
 - e. Need to graduate high school within a reasonable timeframe.

After Rescreening, detailed records of the rescreening process and screener results should be documented in students' permanent file (SIS). A cover letter or locally developed form should be attached to clarify the presence of two screeners, which may confuse future schools. Update EL status in state reporting, correcting any data errors in FTE and Student Records collections that occur from requalification. Contact the GaDOE ESOL Program (ELPrograms@doe.k12.ga.us) for help with crafting the required error relief justification. If appropriate, administer the WIDA assessment. If a student is reclassified before or during the WIDA ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS window, administer the appropriate assessment. Provide services for qualifying students. Place students in the ESOL program, notify parents, document accommodations using the EL Testing Participation Committee (ELTPC) process, and update the SIS accordingly.

C. English Language Proficiency (ELP) Screeners

Prior to screening students, all test administrators and examiners must be GaPSC-certified and meet Georgia's certification and training requirements by

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completing all applicable WIDA Screener training modules in WIDA Secure Portal.
Parental consent to administer the screener is not required.

1. WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is administered to potential EL students enrolling in kindergarten (first or second semester) and in the first semester of Grade 1. In the first semester of the school year, only the Listening and Speaking domains are administered to Kindergarten students. This paper based screener is administered individually and results in raw scores. The raw score totals are entered into the [WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Score Calculator](#) which generates an Oral Language composite score and an Overall Proficiency Level (CPL) score. Overall CPL scores are only generated when all four language domains are administered. A printed copy of the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Score Report is placed in the student's EL records to be uploaded to the SIS at the end of the school year. Using the [English Learners Entrance Procedures flow chart for kindergarten through the first semester of grade 1](#), ESOL teachers determine if a student meets criteria for EL eligibility.

2. WIDA Screener Online (1–12)

The WIDA Screener Online assesses the ELP level of potential EL students in Grades 1-12, beginning in the second semester of Grade 1. Administered in the appropriate grade-level cluster (see chart below), the assessment measures a student's English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Results are reported in composite proficiency levels (CPLs) and used to determine EL eligibility based on the [English Learners Entrance Procedures flow chart for second semester grade 1 through grade 12](#).

Student Grade Levels	Grade Level Cluster Screener	Language Domain Tests to Administer
1st Semester Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Listening & Speaking
2nd Semester Kindergarten – 1st Semester Grade 1	Kindergarten	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
2nd Semester Grade 1 – 1st Semester Grade 2	Grade 1	

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2nd Semester Grade 2 – 1st Semester Grade 4	Grades 2-3	
2nd Semester Grade 4 – 1st Semester Grade 6	Grades 4-5	
2nd Semester Grade 6 – 1st Semester Grade 9	Grades 6-8	
2nd Semester Grade 9-12	Grades 9-12	

3. WIDA Alternate Screener (K–12)

The WIDA Alternate Screener assesses the ELP level of potential EL students in Grades K-12 who are students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, who cannot take the regular assessment even with appropriate accommodations, *and* who have an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP) documenting eligibility for alternate curriculum and alternate state assessments, i.e., the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA 2.0). The WIDA Alternate Screener consists of items targeting WIDA’s Alternate Proficiency Levels (APLs) 3-5 in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Administrators should use the appropriate grade-level cluster (K-2, 3-5, or 6-12) based on the student’s current grade level. WIDA Alternate Screener test materials can be downloaded from the WIDA Secure Portal. Once screening is complete, raw score totals are entered into the [WIDA Alternate Screener Score Calculator](#) to generate and print a score report. Results are reviewed by the IEP and ESOL teams to ensure accurate eligibility decisions are made, based on the [WIDA Alternate EL Entrance Procedures flow chart for students in Kindergarten or the first semester of grade 1](#) or the [Alternate EL Entrance Procedures flow chart for students in the second semester of grade 1 through grade 12](#). Only the WIDA Alternate Screener score results are used in the decision-making process of identifying a student as EL. **Although WIDA recommends that screener scores should be considered as only one element in the decision-making process, Georgia does not consider student progress reports, other test scores, and parent or teacher interviews for initial EL identification.*

4. Screener Test Security Procedures

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Testing materials are kept in locked storage when not in use. Online access is password-protected, and examiners and proctors follow GaDOE security guidelines. Staff are retrained annually on test security.

5. Screener Irregularities and Invalidations

LEAs take proactive steps to prevent testing irregularities during the ELP screening process. If any irregularities occur, LEAs are responsible for documenting them locally and ensuring corrective actions are taken. Test Administrators and Test Examiners work collaboratively throughout the ELP screening process and share responsibilities for screener security and administration, per local policy and procedures.

D. ELP Screening in the Context of Special Education

This section outlines four key decision pathways to help school teams in selecting the appropriate ELP screener for potential EL students who have suspected or documented disabilities found on page 38 of the [ESOL Program State Resource Guide 2025-2026](#). Decision Pathways 1 and 2 apply to students with an active IEP. Decision Pathways 3 and 4 are designed for students with suspected disabilities who are currently undergoing evaluation for special education eligibility and development of an IEP or Section 504 Plan.

1. Process for students with documented disabilities in general curriculum

Students with documented disabilities in general curriculum may already have an active IEP which includes the team's decision about which ELP screener to administer and which accommodations are appropriate. If the team has not determined which screener and accommodations best suit the student, the IEP team can amend the active IEP to document these decisions prior to screening.

2. Process for students with documented significant cognitive disabilities in alternate curriculum

The WIDA Alternate Screener is administered to potential EL students in Grades K-12 who have significant cognitive disabilities and are determined eligible for the alternate curriculum and GAA 2.0, when grade-level appropriate, as documented in their IEP.

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3. Process for students with suspected disabilities when Special Education evaluation is completed within 30 days

If no IEP exists, schools must begin the MTSS process or a special education evaluation when they suspect a student may have a disability. If the evaluation, eligibility determination, and IEP are completed within the thirty day EL identification window, the ELP screener decision can be included in the initial IEP.

4. Process for students with suspected disabilities when Special Education evaluation is ongoing after 30 days

If more than 30 days is needed to complete a special education evaluation, eligibility determination, and IEP, the IEP team may consider referral, evaluation, and eligibility for a Section 504 Plan to document the appropriate ELP screener format and any needed accommodations. When the evaluation, eligibility determination, and IEP are completed within students' first year of enrollment in a U.S. school, teams may find that the initial screener format or accommodations may not have been valid given the students' disabilities. In this case, teams review whether to rescreen students using a different screener, format or set of accommodations. This process helps ensure the screener accurately reflects the student's English language proficiency rather than measuring students' disability.

E. EL Eligibility Criteria by Grade Level, Semester, and Screener

Eligibility is based on GaDOE criteria as outlined in the table below.

		EL Eligibility Criteria	
Grade Level and Semester	Language Domains	WIDA Screener for Kindergarten	WIDA Alternate Screener, K-12
1st semester kindergarten	Listening Speaking	Oral Language Proficiency = 1.0 - 4.9	Alternate Oral Language Proficiency < 3, = 3, or = 4
2nd semester	Listening	Overall CPL	Alternate Overall

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kindergarten - 1st semester Grade 1	Speaking Reading Writing	= 1.0 - 4.9	CPL < 3, = 3, or = 4
		WIDA Screener, Grades 1-12	WIDA Alternate Screener, K-12
2nd semester Grade 1 - Grade 12	Listening Speaking Reading Writing	Overall CPL = 1.0 - 4.9	Alternate Overall CPL < 3, = 3, or = 4

Students in 2nd semester of Grade 1 to students in Grade 12 are evaluated using the WIDA Online Screener appropriate for their grade level and band.

F. Screening procedures, results, and accuracy

Students who are eligible for screening will be screened using the WIDA Screener appropriate for their grade level and semester. Once the WIDA screener is completed and eligibility has been determined, the ESOL teacher completes the [Initial Referral Form](#). All Initial Referral Forms are shared with the district office. Students who are eligible for ESOL services are flagged as EL-Y in the SIS and the date of identification and number of segments are recorded. Information is also added to the SIS for students who did not qualify (DNQ) for ESOL services. The ESOL teacher creates a file for each student, regardless of eligibility, to include the HLS, WIDA Screener, and Initial Referral Form. Forms are uploaded to the SIS at the end of the school year.

G. Parent Notification of EL Status and ESOL Program Placement

Parents are notified in writing within 30 days of the start of the school for newly identified students. For students enrolling mid-year, parents are notified within 10 days of verification of ESOL eligibility. Letters are translated into home languages whenever possible. Parents may waive services, but students remain EL-coded, receive accommodations, and participate in the spring administration of WIDA ACCESS.

Section II: ESOL Language Program Components

A. Teachers

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According to ESOL State Board Rule 160-4-5-.02, ESOL teachers must hold a clear teaching certificate and either an ESOL endorsement or ESOL certification issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC).

B. Additional staff including leaders

Trained paraprofessionals are able to provide additional language instruction under the direct supervision of a certified ESOL teacher, but this may not replace the ESOL teachers' daily ESOL language instruction. Tift County's ESOL Coordinator is the Director of Federal Programs/Assistant Superintendent of Beyond the Core.

C. Professional Learning

To ensure ESOL teachers remain current with research and best practices, Tift County Schools provides ongoing professional learning through district ESOL meetings, participation in RESA professional development opportunities, as well as WIDA modules. Teachers of ELs (general education teachers, special education teachers, and support personnel) receive ongoing EL-focused professional development opportunities that focus on instructional practices and interventions for ELs to facilitate the provision of English language assistance services and any additional support considered essential to content areas.

D. Delivery Models

When choosing the appropriate delivery model for students, the following factors should be considered:

- Students' English language proficiency levels
- Length of time in U.S. schools
- Educational background and prior experiences
- School-specific characteristics and resources

1. Push-In / Collaborative

Students remain in core academic classes where they receive content instruction from the content teacher and targeted language instruction from the ESOL teacher.

2. Pull-Out

Students are removed from a general education class for the

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purpose of receiving small group language instruction from the ESOL teacher.

3. Scheduled ESOL

Students receive instruction in foundational social and instructional English and the academic English of mathematics, science, social studies, or English language arts in a class composed only of ELs taught by an ESOL teacher.

4. Innovative Delivery Model

This model is used sparingly and only with approval from the Tift County ESOL Director. ESOL students are provided with language support through multiple sources, including paraprofessional assistance under the supervision of an ESOL-endorsed teacher, as well as computer-based language instruction.

E. Reporting FTE segments

EL students served in Tift County Schools ESOL language program must receive the equivalent of **at least five instructional segments** per week of academic English development. Instruction may be delivered through one or more approved ESOL service delivery models using appropriate ELD resources.

ESOL Instructional Minutes per FTE Segments and Grade Levels

Grade Levels	Daily Minutes Per Segment	Daily ESOL Segments Maximum	Weekly Minutes Minimum
K-2	45 minutes	1	225
4-8	50 minutes	2	250
9-12	55 minutes	5	275
Block Schedule	90 minutes	2	225

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Grade level placement -EL students should be placed in age appropriate grade levels or courses. If a lower placement is necessary due to lack of formal schooling, best practice is that it should not be more than one year below-same age English peers.

Promotion & Retention -Students **shall not** be retained based on a lack of English proficiency.

F. Class Sizes

Grade Levels	Funding Class Size	Maximum average class size	
		No Paraprofessionals	With Paraprofessionals
K-3	7	11	13
4-8	7	14	15
9-12	7	18	20

G. Parent Waivers

Parents have the right to decline all or part of the ESOL program for their child. This decision must be *knowing and voluntary*, as required by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). When parents choose to opt out of ESOL services, they must complete a [Parent Waiver of Direct ESOL Services Form](#). One copy of the form is kept in the student's EL records, and another copy is forwarded to the Administrative Office for upload into the Student Information System (SIS).

It is important to note that completing the waiver form **does not exit the student from ESOL eligibility**. Students remain eligible for ESOL services until they reach English proficiency, as determined by ACCESS assessments.

A parental waiver is valid for **one school year only**. If parents wish to continue waiving ESOL services, a new waiver form must be completed annually. Parents also have the right to rescind the waiver at any time. A [Rescindment of Parent Waiver of ESOL Services Form](#) should be completed. One copy of the form is

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kept in the student's EL records, and another copy is forwarded to the Administrative Office for upload into the Student Information System (SIS).

Although students with a waiver do not receive direct ESOL services, they are still entitled to ESOL accommodations on all classroom and standardized assessments. For this reason, an **ELTPC** must be completed for all students with an ESOL waiver.

H. English language development standards

ESOL teachers in the state of Georgia are required to use the **WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework (2020 Edition)** with supplemental resources. The framework guides teachers to:

- Create language goals and scaffolding strategies.
- Design instruction based on students' English language proficiency (ELP) levels.
- Provide focused instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Connect language development to Georgia's content standards (ELA, math, science, and social studies).

We ensure that English Learners receive instruction aligned to the WIDA Standards and are supported through appropriate scaffolding strategies and accommodations.

I. Instructional curricula and resources

ESOL instruction is driven by and aligned with the WIDA standards, Georgia's K-12 English Language Arts Standards, and the Georgia Standards of Excellence for Math, Science, and Social Studies. The Tift County ESOL Program uses resources including, but not limited to HMH, Finishline, Imagine Learning, and Rosetta Stone.

J. Providing meaningful access to core content

EL students have the right to schools' full core curriculum, including specialized and advanced courses. Schools fulfill this obligation by ensuring EL students receive grade-appropriate instruction from the start of their participation in the ESOL program. Educators use intentional language scaffolding and

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evidence-based instructional strategies to support both language development and content mastery.

Placing EL students at age-appropriate grade levels is essential. This approach gives students meaningful access to academic programs that help them meet grade-level standards and maintain a path toward on-time graduation. By maintaining high expectations and providing appropriate support, schools ensure EL students are positioned to thrive academically and graduate prepared for college, career, and life.

According to OCR guidelines:

- School systems must establish policies and procedures that uphold EL students' legal right to access grade level content.
- A recommended best practice is: If a lower grade level placement is necessary due to a student's lack of formal schooling, it should not be more than one year below English-speaking peers of the same age.
- Specialized instruction in the core curriculum should be age-appropriate and equally rigorous compared to instruction provided to English-only students.
- When scaffolding lessons, educators must avoid simplifying the curriculum in ways that limit EL students' long-term academic success.

K. Literacy for ELs

The Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act requires that all K-3 students be included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs pursuant to O.C.G.A. §20-2-153.1. This includes ELs. Additionally, the State Board of Education (SBOE) 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs - Student Assessment, requires all ELs, including those who enroll in a U.S. school for the first time, to participate in all assessment programs. When reviewing the results of literacy screeners and other assessments, the school team should view them through a “language lens” which considers students' current level of English development in all four language domains - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In response, educators devise language-rich Tier 1 supports and tiered interventions, when necessary, that consider EL's specific ELP and literacy instructional needs, including foundational skills.

L. Accommodation on state assessments (ELTPC)

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Each year, the TPC committee convenes to determine the formative and summative assessment accommodations EL students need in order to meaningfully participate in each assessment for the school year. The TPC committee shall be comprised of a minimum of three members, one of whom is an educator certified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, and must include the ESOL teacher currently serving the student with English language assistance. In addition, school administrators and parents are invited to attend. These accommodations will be taken from the table of allowable test accommodations located in the Student Assessment Handbook and/or test administration manuals. Any accommodation considered that is not found in the Student Assessment Handbook must be approved by the Assessment Administration Division of the GaDOE prior to use. All accommodations must be consistent with classroom instruction and assessment and support any plans that have been designed to aid the student instructionally. All decisions made are documented in the students' ELTPC using the appropriate form.

M. Students' access to support services

- **Eligibility for the Early Intervention Program (EIP) or Remedial Education Program (REP)**

Per GaDOE policy, EL students receiving ESOL language instruction services may be served in the early intervention program if the EIP or REP services are provided in a different content area or if services within the same content are not delivered concurrently.

- **Georgia's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (GaMTSS)**

English learners (ELs) are supported within the MTSS framework as part of general education, and the ESOL teacher is an essential member of the MTSS team. Further information about Tift County Schools' MTSS process can be found in the guidance document below. In addition, all students in grades Kindergarten through third grade are screened three times per year for significant reading deficiencies and risk level of dyslexia. The screening is part of the requirements for Georgia House Bill 307. For students who demonstrate significant reading deficiencies, a tiered support plan is created, and interventions are provided.

-  FY 26 Tift County Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTS...

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-  Considerations for English Learners at risk for Dyslexia.pdf

N. EL student subgroups

1. Newcomers

Newcomer programs are designed to support recently arrived ELs (RAELs), typically at the secondary level, who have little or no English proficiency and limited or interrupted formal education in their home countries. These programs play a critical role in helping newcomer students transition into their new academic environment with confidence and the tools needed to thrive.

A newcomer program may operate as a stand-alone program or be embedded within an existing school. Regardless of the model, the core goals remain the same:

- Develop foundational English language skills,
- Support adjustment and social integration,
- Introduce students to core academic content,
- Guide students as they navigate the U.S. school system, and
- Build early literacy and language skills to prepare students for continued success.

The State Board of Education (SBOE) 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs - Student Assessment, requires all ELs, including those who enroll in a U.S. school for the first time, to participate in all assessment programs.

The ESOL program utilizes a Bilingual English Learners Support Specialist. This specialist works closely with students who are new to the country and those who have been here for a while but still need additional support in developing their English language skills. The role of the District English Learners Support Specialist is to provide targeted assistance to help these students succeed both academically and socially. This includes support in language development, classroom strategies, and resources tailored to their individual needs. Our specialist collaborates with all teachers to prioritize and plan the most effective support for newcomers. By working together the District English Learners Support Specialist and classroom teachers ensure our newcomers receive the support they need to thrive.

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2. Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) may have:

- Experienced interruptions in their education due to factors such as war, civil unrest, or migration
- Limited prior schooling before enrolling in US schools
- Received limited or inadequate instruction in their home countries due to untrained teachers, under-resourced schools, or other systemic barriers

SLIFE is not defined at the state level. When identifying SLIFE students, LEAs may take into consideration factors such as:

- The number of grade levels students are behind their peers
- The last grade level students successfully completed
- Gaps in students' foundational literacy or numeracy skills

3. Long-term ELs (LTELs)

Long term English learners are students who:

- Have been enrolled in US schools for more than 5 years
- Have not reached English proficiency
- Continue to struggle academically, often due to persistent language development needs
- Have not met exit criteria to exit the ESOL program

LEAs can implement targeted strategies to support LTELs such as:

- Supplemental language instruction, including dedicated support classes
- Frequent monitoring of academic progress
- Interventions tailored to language development and content mastery
- Positive and welcoming school environments that promote academic confidence

4. Gifted

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Students who are both English Learners (ELs) and identified as Gifted (GATE) are considered “dually served” and must receive support and services from both programs. The state provides guidance to ensure that giftedness is recognized and nurtured in ELs while still supporting their language development needs.

i. Eligibility & Identification -

EL status does not prevent a student from being tested or identified for gifted services.

ii. Service Delivery

- a. **Gifted (GATE):** Students are served through one or more GaDOE-approved models (resource class, advanced content, cluster grouping, or collaborative teaching).
- b. **ESOL:** Students continue to receive ESOL services through an approved delivery model (push-in, pull-out, co-teaching, scheduled class period, etc.).
- c. The student’s schedule must show **both ESOL and Gifted services**.

iii. Coding & Data Collections

- a. Students are flagged in SIS as **both EL and Gifted**.
- b. FTE reporting allows for both services; there’s no conflict because gifted and ESOL are different program areas. **No conflict exists as long as the student is not being reported as receiving the same service for the same content area twice.**

iv. Assessment & Accountability

- a. ACCESS for ELLs: The student continues to take ACCESS each year until they meet GaDOE exit criteria.
- b. Gifted coursework/assessments: Students participate in gifted curriculum and assessments with accommodations for language as appropriate.
- c. The goal is to ensure ELs are not underrepresented or excluded from gifted opportunities due to language proficiency.

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5. Dually identified and served (EL/SWD)

Students who are both **English Learners (ELs)** and **Students with Disabilities (SWD)** (sometimes called “dually served”) are supported through a combination of **ESOL services** and **special education services**, with coordination required between both programs.

i. Eligibility & Identification

- a. A student may qualify for **ESOL** services through the Home Language Survey and WIDA ACCESS/SCREENER results.
- b. They may also qualify for **special education** services through IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) after evaluation.
- c. Both identifications are independent, but once both apply, the student **must** receive services in both areas.

ii. Service Delivery

- a. **ESOL services:** Delivered through one of the GaDOE-approved ESOL delivery models (i.e. push-in, pull-out, cluster center, resource, co-teaching, scheduled class period).
- b. **Special education services:** Delivered per the IEP, which may include resource support, inclusion/co-teaching, or specialized instruction.
- c. A **student’s schedule must reflect services from both programs.**

iii. Planning & Documentation

- a. **IEP Teams: Must** include someone knowledgeable about EL services when planning for a dually served student.
- b. The IEP **must** specify how the disability impacts English language development and how language supports will be provided.
- c. **ESOL teachers** collaborate with case managers to ensure language needs are addressed alongside disability-related needs.

iv. Coding & Data Collections

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- a. In Student Information Systems (SIS), students are flagged both as **EL** and **SWD**.
- b. FTE reporting allows for both programs; **no conflict exists as long as the student is not being reported as receiving the same service for the same content area twice.**
- c. GaDOE explicitly permits **simultaneous services** (ESOL and SpEd) in the same classroom, provided the services are distinct.

v. Assessments & Accountability

- a. Dually served students take **ACCESS for ELLs** each year until they meet exit criteria, regardless of disability.
- b. Accommodations for disabilities (documented in the IEP) must be applied consistently on both classroom and state assessments.
- c. Participation in Milestones or alternate assessments follows **SWD guidelines** but always includes language supports per EL status as outlined on the TPC (Testing Participation) document.

O. Parent communication and engagement activities

Each year, parents are invited to attend TPC meetings. Throughout each school year, parents are invited to attend Gifted, IEP and RTI meetings as meetings occur. Various forms of communication are shared with families in home languages where applicable.

Section III: EL Exit, Reclassification & Post-Exit Procedures

Students exit based on ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS scores meeting GaDOE criteria. Those scoring in the flexibility range are reviewed by a reclassification committee. Parents are notified of exit decisions in English and their home language. Exited students are monitored for two years with regular progress checks, teacher feedback, and grade reviews.

A. ELP assessments considered for exiting and reclassification include the WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten, WIDA ACCESS, Grades 1-12, and WIDA Alternate ACCESS, Grades K-12.

B. Clear exit criteria

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WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten Clear Exit	• Overall CPL or DCPL ≥ 5.0 and Listening PL ≥ 5.0 and Speaking PL ≥ 5.0 and Reading PL ≥ 5.0, and Writing PL ≥ 4.5 • Kindergarten students' scores must meet the overall CPL and all individual language domain criteria, no exceptions.
Kindergarten WIDA Alternate ACCESS Clear Exit	• Overall CPL or DCPL = 5 and Listening PL = 5 and Speaking PL = 5 and Reading PL = 5 and Writing PL = 4 or 5 • Kindergarten students' scores must meet the overall CPL and all individual language domain criteria, no exceptions.
Grades 1-12 WIDA ACCESS Clear Exit	• Overall CPL or DCPL ≥ 5.0
Grades 1-12 WIDA Alternate ACCESS Clear Exit	• Overall CPL or DCPL = 5

C. EL Reclassification & IEP/EL Reclassification procedures

Responsibilities related to the reclassification process include the following:

1. Hold reclassification meetings for all EL students in grades 1-12 who meet reclassification criteria.
2. Document the meeting and the decision using the appropriate form and maintain this documentation.
3. Report the reclassification decision.
4. Communicate with parents by inviting them to the meeting and if parents are not available, be sure to share the meeting's summary and decision.

**Reclassification criteria is taken from ESOL Program State Resource Guide.*

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Grades 1-12 WIDA ACCESS Reclassification Criteria	1. Students meet established Overall CPL or DCPL minimum within the 4.3 – 4.9 range. 2. Optional: Students meet secondary criteria from objective, reliable language-related assessments that are consistently applied and weighted across the LEA. • Subjective factors, such as classroom grades, attendance, behavior, opinions, feelings, and non-language related assessments, such as mathematics, are not valid for reclassification purposes. 3. Completed EL Reclassification form documents the school team's reclassification decision. <i>*Designated Composite Proficiency Level</i>
Grades 1-12 WIDA Alternate ACCESS Reclassification Criteria	1. Students meet Overall CPL or DCPL = 4 2. Optional: Students meet additional individualized ELP related data applied per students' disabilities, per IEP team determination. 3. Completed, signed, dated IEP/EL Reclassification form documents IEP team's reclassification decision. The decision is also documented in students' IEP.

D. Designated Composite Proficiency Level procedures

Process for precluding one or more language domains on the ELP Screener

Some students may have disabilities which prevent them from fully participating in all domains of the WIDA screener/Alternate screener. The student's IEP or 504 team must follow the steps listed below in order to determine if any domain of the assessment needs to be ruled out. The results are a DCPL - Designated Composite Proficiency Level.

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Step 1. Meet and discuss testing accommodations for each domain of the assessment.

IEP team	Review accommodations for WIDA screener/Alternate screener based on students' needs
504 team	Review accommodations for the WIDA Screener only, the Alternate screener is only available to students with an IEP

- When discussing the accommodations, each domain must be considered with attention to the student's disability.
- If the allowable accommodations don't enable the student to access a domain, the team may rule out that domain.
- If precluding a domain, the student **must** take the paper version of the screener and at least one domain of the assessment must be administered to determine eligibility.
- In the situation a student cannot participate in any domain, an ESOL teacher and a Special Education teacher must collaborate to contact the GA DOE ESOL Program and the Division for Exceptional Children to decide on the appropriate steps.

**For information on specific disabilities related to blindness, deafness or nonverbal students, please refer to the state guidance manual pages 46-47.*

Step 2. Document Precluded Domains

- The IEP/504 team must complete the ELP Screener Language Domain form found in the ESOL Program State Guide: Appendix F [https://ESOL Program State Resource Guide](https://ESOLProgramStateResourceGuide)
- This documentation must be maintained in the student's permanent file.

** For additional information which summarizes Step 1 & 2, please refer to the Checkpoint Charts in the state guidance manual pages 47-48.*

Step 3. Administer the Selected Language Domains for the Appropriate Screener.

Step 4. Generate a Score Using WIDA Score Calculator.

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[WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Score Calculator](#)

[WIDA Screener Paper Score Calculator](#)

[WIDA Alternate Screener Score Calculator](#)

- Only input scores for the domains given. If a domain was precluded, leave this score blank. Do not enter a score of zero because this will generate an invalid Composite Proficiency Score

**For examples of how to input scores, please see the state resource guide pages 49-50.*

Step 5. Determine if the Student Meets Eligibility Criteria

	EL Eligibility Criteria for Tested Domains		
Grade and Semester	Language Domains	WIDA Screener	WIDA Alternate Screener
1st semester K	Listening & Speaking	L or S PL < 5.0	L or S Alternate PL < 5.0
2nd semester K	Listening Speaking Reading Writing	L, S, or R PL < 5.0 or W PL < 4.5	L, S, or R Alternate PL < 5.0 or W PL < 4.5
Grades 1-12		L, S, R, or W PL < 5.0	L, S, R, or W Alternate PL < 5.0
If the proficiency level on any of the tested domains is 1.0 - 4.9 (WIDA Screener) or if the Alternate PL is < 3 or = 3 or 4 (WIDA Alternate Screener), then the student is eligible for EL status. If the proficiency levels on all tested language domains are 5.0 or greater (WIDA Screener) or the Alternate PL = 5 (WIDA Alternate Screener), the student does not qualify (DNQ) for EL status.			

Beginning April 2019, the state determined ELs with disabilities, whose disability precludes one or more domains, should be considered for exit if they meet state defined criteria using the GA DOE calculated Designated CPL (DCPL).

- **Documentation Requirements for DCPL Process**

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When an IEP/504 team decides to preclude one or more domains of the WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS assessment, they must document this decision in the student's IEP/504 plan before coding the domain as precluded and a rationale must be provided.

Important note: ESOL and Special Education personnel must collaborate in order to submit the **WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS Language Domain Preclusion Request Form prior to the WIDA test administration window.*

DCPL Process

1. Administer the appropriate WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS domains as listed in the student's IEP/504.
2. For domains not administered, mark **Do Not Score** with reason **SPD** (Student's Program/Plan Team's Decision code) in student test booklet or in WIDA AMS.
3. GaDOE calculates a Designated Overall Composite Proficiency Level (DCPL) for English learners, shares it with LEAs through the secure assessment system, and LEAs use it—along with WIDA results—to determine exit or reclassification status.
4. Share the DCPL reports with parents in a language they understand.

**WIDA ACCESS Individual Student Reports and WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS scores within SLDS will only display results for administered language domains and will not include DCPL.*

E. Monitoring exit procedures, results, accuracy, consistency, etc.

Within the timeframe of May-June during the school year, ESOL teachers complete the following steps:	1. WIDA ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS scores are received and reviewed. 2. ESOL teachers determine who meets clear exit criteria, as well as, reclassification criteria. 3. Proper exiting documentation is completed and reclassification meetings are held. Reclassification decisions occur before the end of the school year. 4. For all students marked as EL = '1' (first year after exit), report a reason for the exit: Clear exit,
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	reclassification exit, or out-of-state/non-public school exit. <i>* Changes in EL status should be recorded after June student record sign off- record date as June 30. If a reclassification team meets at the beginning of a new school year, decisions made are retroactive to the end of the previous school year.</i>
If necessary from July-September:	If schools don't meet the deadline at the end of the school year for EL Reclassification meetings, they may hold these meetings at the beginning of the school year but no later than 30 days after school begins. EL Reclassification meetings are not permitted at any other time during the school year.

Transferring reclassified ELs within Georgia - Whenever a reclassified EL transfers to another district in Georgia, the receiving local educational agency must honor the reclassification decision when the EL transfers after the October FTE count. If the transfer occurs during the first two weeks of school and the transferring LEA uses lesser reclassification criteria, the receiving LEA may observe the student's performance and hold another reclassification meeting to review documentation and evidence. If a different decision is made, parents must be notified.

Post Exit Data Reporting

EL = '1'	1st year post-exit – student progress is monitored by teachers & reported to state
EL = '2'	2nd year post-exit – student progress is monitored by teachers & reported to state
EL = '3'	3rd year post-exit – student progress is reported to state
EL = '4'	4th year post-exit – student progress is reported to state
EL = 'F'	5 or more years post-exit – student progress is no longer monitored

F. Parent Notification of EL exit

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EL students who meet statewide criteria for English proficiency must be exited or reclassified. They will no longer be eligible for participation in the ESOL program and the ACCESS assessment. The Office of Civil Rights considers it a compliance issue when a school fails to exit EL students from ESOL programs after the EL students have demonstrated English proficiency.

Parents must be notified in writing of their child's exit from the ESOL program. ESOL teachers send home information pertaining to the EL student's most recent WIDA ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS test results. The *End of Services* documentation, which is sent home to parents, shows that the student has met the level of English proficiency needed to exit from English learner status and does not need the specialized ESOL language instruction program services. Additionally, parents are notified of the next steps in the monitoring process. Parents receive information explaining the academic progress of exited EL students will be closely monitored for two years following their exit from the program.

G. Post-Exit Data Elements and Reporting Timelines

Date of Exit - ELs who have met the standardized statewide exit or reclassification criteria must be exited from EL status. The EL EXIT DATE must be June 30 of the school year in which students met the exit criteria. However, this date cannot be recorded in the SIS until after July 1. To ensure that LEA data are recorded correctly for accountability and for funding purposes, coding in the LEA's SIS must not be changed for students *before* July 1.

EL Exit Reason - EL Exit Reason describes the method used to determine students' placement in the monitoring phase. The EL exit is required when the student's EL status is '1' or '2'.

Code	Description
'1'	Clear Exit (WIDA ACCESS Proficiency)
'3'	Out-of-State/Non-Public School Exit
'4'	Reclassification Exit
Blank	N/A

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Post-Exit Reporting Timeline & Information - After July 1, and after exit or reclassification decisions are made, LEAs report students status as EL = '1' with DATE OF EL EXIT on June 30 of the school year in which students met the exit or reclassification criteria.

H. Post-exit two-year student progress monitoring procedures

The monitoring process consists of a documented review of report card grades, state assessment results, classroom performance and teacher observations for the purpose of ensuring the successful transition to the general classroom. Post-Exit Monitoring forms are housed in the ESOL shared Google folder for the current fiscal year.

Section IV: ESOL Program Evaluation

The district conducts annual program evaluations, analyzing ACCESS results, growth percentiles, exit rates, CCRPI indicators, and participation data. Results guide professional learning and program improvement.

Data to Gather/Analyze

- EL exit rates by school system
<https://gosa.georgia.gov/dashboards-data-report-card/downloadable-data>
- ELP assessment participation rates
- ELP assessments proficiency level results
- WIDA ACCESS Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)

Student growth percentiles are available each year in SLDS (Student Longitudinal Data System) and are used to program effectiveness.

- CCRPI components (Closing Gaps, Progress Toward English Language Proficiency, Content Mastery)
https://ccrpireportspublic.gadoe.org/ccrpireportspublicweb/Views/Shared/_Layout.html
- ELP Progress toward ELP Proficiency Charts can be found on pages 12 and 13 of the [CCRPI Calculation Guide](#).

Section V: Local Forms and Resources

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All required forms, including the Home Language Survey, Amendments, Waivers, Parent Notification Letters, Reclassification Committee Forms, Post-Exit Monitoring Forms, EL/TPC Accommodation cover signature sheets and guidelines, and GaDOE Flowcharts are housed in the ESOL shared Google folder for the current fiscal year. EL/TPC forms are written and housed in Educlimber SIS.

All forms are translated into major languages spoken in the district.