

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

33-1618 Assessment Exemption



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

650 W STATE STREET, 2ND FLOOR
BOISE, IDAHO 83702
208 332 6800 OFFICE / 711 TRS
WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV

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INTRODUCTION

Per [Idaho Code 33-1618](#) and [Idaho Code 33-1811](#), as amended by [HB 566](#) during the 2024 legislative session, all students who have not been enrolled in an elementary or secondary school in the United States for two (2) full school years *and* who score below a 2.0 on the English Language Proficiency Assessment may be eligible for an assessment exemption. An assessment exemption may include the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) and dyslexia screener. English learners identified for this exemption would neither participate in the fall nor spring IRI for the entirety of that specific school year. This document provides guidance to support local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and educators in understanding how to identify students who are eligible for the exemption and instructions on how to opt a student out of an assessment exemption.

LEGISLATIVE INTENTION

House Bill 566 was designed and passed for the purpose of allowing students who are still learning the English language, within their first two years in a US school, be exempt from participating in the Idaho Reading Indicator and dyslexia screener. The purpose for allowing an assessment exemption is three-fold:

1. IRI may not be an appropriate measure of early literacy abilities for a student who has a beginning English proficiency.
2. False negatives on the IRI are not a valid representation of the school's early literacy program and support services. Allowing for exemptions can create a clearer picture regarding the effectiveness of the school's early literacy program.
3. When a student has a beginning English proficiency, the student may develop a negative mindset towards assessment in the future.

Schools are encouraged to keep the assessment exemption applied to eligible students unless schools determine the "assessment is educationally appropriate or a necessary prerequisite for such student to qualify for additional education services".

ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION OVERVIEW

Key elements of the assessment exemption are outlined below.

- English learners enrolled in grades kindergarten through grade 5 may be eligible to receive an assessment exemption.
- Assessment exemption eligibility depends on the student's most recent ACCESS for ELLs composite overall proficiency level or WIDA Screener / WIDA Screener for Kindergarten proficiency level, whichever is the most current.
- Eligibility determinations happen annually.
- **The assessment exemption is automatically applied to students who qualify.**
- Schools may opt a student out from the assessment exemption within the English Learner Management System (ELMS) prior to an IRI administration.
- English learners who have an exemption applied in kindergarten through grade 5:
 - do not need to participate in IRI for both early literacy and dyslexia purposes;
 - are not eligible for IRI-based literacy funding distributed in the subsequent school year. All English learners continue to be eligible for enrollment-based literacy funding;
 - **may use Istation's formative assessment and progress monitoring tools for students;**
 - **are not included within school IRI accountability calculations.**

ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION CRITERIA

Eligibility for an assessment exemption is determined annually based on:

1. Student's first U.S. School Entry Date; and
2. Student's most current English language proficiency level:
 - a. ACCESS for ELLs – composite overall English proficiency level; or
 - b. WIDA Screener – composite overall English proficiency level; or
 - c. WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Oral Proficiency level.

First U.S. School Entry Date

To qualify for an assessment exemption, a student must enter a U.S. school for the first time between June 1 and May 31 of the current or previous school year.

English Language Proficiency Level

To qualify for an assessment exemption, the most recent composite overall English language proficiency level must be less than 2.0 (Emerging) on either ACCESS for ELLs (ACCESS for ELLs Online, ACCESS for ELLs Paper, and WIDA Alternate ACCESS), WIDA Screener, or WIDA Screener for Kindergarten.

Table 1: Determining Assessment Exemption Eligibility Using ACCESS for ELLs

ACCESS For ELLs Form	Domains Tested	Exemption Criteria Name – Composite Scores
ACCESS for ELLs Online	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)
ACCESS for ELLs Paper	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)
WIDA Alternate ACCESS	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Table 2: Determining Assessment Exemption Eligibility Using WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

Enrollment Grade & Semester	Domains Tested	Exemption Criteria Name – Composite Scores
Kindergarten / Semester One (On or before December 31)	Listening and Speaking	Oral Proficiency - (1.0 or 1.5)
Kindergarten / Semester Two (On or after January 1)	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0 or 1.5)
Grade 1 / Semester One (On or before December 31)	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0 or 1.5)

Table 3: Determining Assessment Exemption Eligibility Using WIDA Screener Online & Paper

Enrollment Grade & Semester	Domains Tested	Exemption Criteria Name – Composite Scores
Grade 1 / Semester Two (On or after January 1)	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0 or 1.5)
Grade 2 – Grade 12	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	Overall – (1.0 or 1.5)

ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION PROCESS – KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 5

The Department automatically applies the assessment exemption to students who meet the eligibility criteria at the beginning of the school year. Schools can view a list of students who meet the eligibility criteria by accessing the [IRI Exemption Eligibility](#) report found in the English Learner Management System (ELMS).

At the beginning of the school year, schools who wish to opt a student out from the assessment exemption must indicate and confirm this decision in ELMS under the district’s EL Student Summary. A decision to opt a student out from the assessment exemption must be recorded in ELMS before the fall IRI window closes (September 30) or before the fall IRI administration date. For students identified as EL after the fall IRI assessment window, an assessment exemption opt-out decision must be recorded within ELMS before the close of the spring IRI window or before the spring IRI administration date. Once an assessment exemption or an assessment exemption opt-out has been recorded, it will remain in place for the duration of the school year (June 1 – May 30).

Assessment Exemption Eligibility Report – ELMS

Review the steps in [Appendix A – ELMS Exemption Report](#) to access a report that lists English learners eligible for an assessment exemption. It is recommended to review the report at the beginning of the year to ensure that assessment exemption decisions are captured before fall testing.

Assessment Exemption Opt-Out – ELMS

A school's decision to opt-out of an assessment exemption must be indicated and confirmed within the English Learner Management System (ELMS). There are three ways to find and make modifications to an English learner's assessment exemption record. The three options are outlined in [Appendix B – ELMS Assessment Exemption Opt-Out Procedure](#).

If an EL is administered and completes the IRI prior to the school completing the opt-out process in ELMS, the school forfeits the option to include the student's scores for school accountability.

EARLY LITERACY & DYSPLEXIA CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to carefully consider the following implications to ensure an assessment exemption is in the best interest of each individual student.

Early Literacy Considerations

- How will these students be represented within LEA and school data conversations?
- What tools will the LEA use to evaluate the literacy skills of incoming and returning students who have an assessment exemption applied?

Dyslexia Considerations

Applying an assessment exemption to an assessment that screens for characteristics of dyslexia, such as the Idaho Reading Indicator, requires careful consideration, and may include defining alternative methods to ensure equitable access to educational services and activities are present for all students. Schools may recognize that foregoing such assessments could impact timely identification and intervention for students at risk of dyslexia or related difficulties. Therefore, schools may identify and implement alternative strategies for screening and support to safeguard the educational rights and opportunities of every student. Proactive measures, such as individualized screening processes or targeted interventions, can be developed to uphold the principle of equal participation in school services and activities for all students, irrespective of their assessment status.

Dyslexia is a condition that transcends linguistic differences and manifests universally across all languages. It is commonly characterized by difficulties in fundamental skills like phonological awareness—recognizing and manipulating sounds in words—and rapid automatized naming (RAN), which involves quickly naming familiar items such as letters or digits. These core deficits

remain consistent regardless of the language spoken, underscoring the importance of using culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments to identify dyslexia in ELs accurately.

For ELs, it is ideal to conduct assessments in both their home language and in English. This dual-language approach helps differentiate between challenges related to language acquisition and dyslexia. For opaque languages like French and Russian, assessments should focus on phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming (RAN), and reading fluency to accurately identify dyslexia-related difficulties. In contrast, for transparent languages such as Spanish, assessments should focus on assessing reading fluency and rapid automatized naming (RAN), highlighting strengths in these areas over decoding abilities.

Examples of alternative assessments:

- Lectura- Spanish ISIP – Early Reading and Advanced Reading for students whose primary language is Spanish;
- Amplify mClass Lectura – Assesses all key foundational skills for K–6, including letter naming, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, and comprehension;
- Renaissance Star Spanish or Star CBM Lectura – Assess key foundational skills based off Scarboroughs’ Reading Rope;
- Acadience Reading Español;
- Conduct a RAN assessment and a PAST assessment in the child’s native language.

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information or for technical assistance, please contact the Assessment and Accountability Department at the Idaho Department of Education.

Assessment & Accountability
Idaho State Department of Education
650 W State Street
Boise, ID 83702
(208) 332-6800

APPENDIX A: ELMS ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION REPORT

1. Navigate to the ISEE Portal (<https://isee.sde.idaho.gov>).
2. Login to the English Learner Management System.
3. Select “District Reports”.
4. Select “IRI Exemption Eligibility” report under the “District Detail Reports” section.
5. Select “Yes” when promoted in Excel.

APPENDIX B: ELMS ASSESSMENT EXEMPTION OPT-OUT PROCEDURE

Important: At the beginning of the year (prior to the first ISEE enrollment upload), newly identified ELs must be manually added to the District’s EL Student Summary. This allows the ELMS user the ability to modify an EL’s Assessment Exemption status.

Option One – EL Student Summary Filter Function

1. Navigate to the ISEE Portal (<https://isee.sde.idaho.gov>).
2. Login to the English Learner Management System.
3. Select “20**-20** EL Student Summary”.
4. Select a filter option to quickly find a student record.
 - a. “Name or EDUID”
 - b. School / Grade / EL Status
5. Under “IRI Exemption” column make the appropriate modifications to a student’s assessment exemption record.
6. To opt a student out from the assessment exemption, select “Yes”.
 - a. Assessment exemption decisions made during the fall window remain fixed throughout the remainder of the year.
 - b. Fall window is from August 1 – September 30.
 - c. When a “Yes” or “No” opt-out decision is made in ELMS during the fall window, the assessment exemption will populate with same decision for the spring window.

- Use the sort function to ensure that modifications were saved.
- When a “Yes” or “No” opt-out decision is made in ELMS during the fall window, the assessment exemption will populate with same decision for the spring window.

Option Three – Find Child Function

This option is recommended to use if the targeted English learner is enrolling from another district and the district EL Student Summary does not currently list the student.

- Navigate to the ISEE Portal (<https://isee.sde.idaho.gov>).
- Login to the English Learner Management System.
- Select “Find Child”.
- Input “Birthday”.
- Input “First Name”.
- Input “Last Name”.
- Select “Search”.

- Select “+ Summary” Under the “Actions” Column once the student is located.
 - This places the student onto the district’s EL Student Summary.

Eduld	Given Name	Family Name	Birth Date	Entry/Exit Date	Current EL Status	Actions
					LE	[History] [Screenshots] [Appeals] [EL Plans] [Waiver] [Notes] [Edit] [8] [+ Summary]
					LE	[History] [Screenshots] [Appeals] [EL Plans] [Waiver] [Notes] [Edit] [8] [+ Summary]
					LE	[History] [Screenshots] [Appeals] [EL Plans] [Waiver] [Notes] [Edit] [8] [+ Summary]
					LE	[History] [Screenshots] [Appeals] [EL Plans] [Waiver] [Notes] [Edit] [8] [+ Summary]

- Select “20**-20** EL Student Summary”.
- Find the child in the district EL Student Summary and make the appropriate modifications.
 - Apply “[Option One – EL Student Summary Filter Function](#)” or “[Option Two – IRI Sort Function](#)”.

APPENDIX C: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **How is “full year” defined?**
 - a. A full year is defined as a student enrolled within an Idaho LEA any time between June 1 and May 31.
2. **What is the timeline to opt-out from an assessment exemption?**
 - a. An assessment exemption is automatically applied annually to English learners who qualify for the exemption. Schools who wish to opt-out of the exemption must record this determination within ELMS prior to the contiguous IRI assessment date.
3. **Can a school opt-out a student from an assessment exemption after the first administration of fall IRI if the student enrolled during the fall IRI window?**
 - a. No.
4. **What other mechanisms/tools/assessments can I use to understand the early literacy skills of my students who receive an assessment exemption?**
 - a. See “[Accountability Implications & Dyslexia Considerations](#)” section of this document.
5. **Does the exemption apply to grades 4 and 5 students?**
 - a. Eligible ELs in grades 4 and 5 may also be exempted from participating in screening for characteristics of dyslexia (33-1811).
6. **When a student is exempted from the IRI, can they still use Istation?**
 - a. Yes. If an LEA chooses to exempt a eligible student from participating in the IRI, according to I.C. 33-1618, they can still participate in both the formative assessments *and* the literacy interventions provided by Istation. Put another way, a student’s participation in the fall/spring IRI has no bearing on whether or not a student can participate in the formative assessment tools and lessons offered by Istation. If the school determines an exempt English learner could benefit from Istation’s digital interventions or progress monitoring, their participation is encouraged.
7. **If an exempted student uses Istation, are they automatically opted-out of the exemption?**
 - a. No. If an exempted student engages in the Istation progress monitoring tools or any of the digital interventions available, it does not affect their exemption status. The English Learner Management System (ELMS) housed in the Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE) portal is a separate system from Istation (contracted test vendor).
8. **How should schools approach whether to use or opt-out of an assessment exemption?**
 - a. LEAs are encouraged to make case-by-base decisions based on the individual student’s needs and abilities.

9. **If exempt EL students are not taking an IRI, are they exempt from an ILIP (Idaho literacy intervention plan)?**
 - a. If exempted English learners exhibit reading deficiency beyond their language acquisition challenges, a reading improvement plan (aka literacy intervention plan) needs to be created.
10. **Our school has several potential EL (English Learner) students in the district, and it will take some time to screen them due to our current staffing. Since our district conducts testing during the first week, should these students wait to take the test until I can screen and decide on their eligibility, or should they take the test first, and we decide later who should be exempt from the next round?**
 - a. It is recommended that provisional ELs be screened prior to the IRI administration. Students not identified as EL based on WIDA Screener scores prior to the IRI administration will have their IRI results recorded as part of the school's accountability calculation.

APPENDIX D: SCENARIOS / WORKED EXAMPLES

Below are worked examples that focus on whether a student is eligible for the 33-1618 assessment exemption.

Student A: WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

Student A recently moved to Idaho and is currently enrolled in kindergarten. Student A was administered the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten to determine whether the child qualifies for EL services. Student A receives an Oral Proficiency score of 2.5.

Outcome: Student A is not eligible for a testing exemption because the student attained a score greater than or equal to 2.0 PL.

Student B: WIDA Screener Online

Student B recently arrived in the United States and is enrolled as a grade 2 student at the beginning of the year. Student B is administered WIDA Screener Online and scores a composite overall score of 1.5.

Outcome: Student B will automatically have the assessment exemption applied. The student will not complete the fall or the spring IRI.

Student C: Assessment Exemption Opt-Out

Student C has been enrolled at a local elementary school for one year and was identified as an EL at the time of enrollment. Student C attained a composite overall English proficiency level of 1.9 on the first summative ACCESS for ELLs test administration (year one). The school has decided to include the student in IRI testing.

Outcome: Student C will automatically receive an assessment exemption for the current school year. The school is required to opt the student out from the assessment exemption in ELMS prior to the fall IRI administration date. Student C will only be eligible to receive one year of assessment exemption since the current year will be the second year the student has been enrolled within a US school.

Student D: EL Identification after Fall IRI Window

Student D enrolls in an Idaho district for the first time in November. The student is given the WIDA Screener Online and attains a composite overall proficiency level of 1.6.

Outcome: Student D is eligible and will have the spring IRI assessment exemption automatically applied for the spring IRI administration.

Student E: Assessment Exemption Applied and EL Completes IRI for Data

Student E enrolls into grade 2 in an Idaho district for the first time in September. The student is given the WIDA Screener Online and attains a composite overall proficiency level of 1.5. School wishes to apply the exemption yet would like IRI data for instructional purposes.

Outcome: Student E is eligible for assessment exemption and completes the IRI. School accountability is not impacted by student's IRI performance scores. The school may use the data for their instructional and intervention purposes. The exemption will apply for the entire year.

APPENDIX E: 33-1618 OPTIONS & OUTCOMES

This appendix outlines how the 33-1618 assessment exemption affects the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) participation, school accountability, and Istation support services for English Learners (ELs). It provides details on three options a school may consider as they approach 33-1618.

Option 1: Assessment Exempt English Learner Participates in Fall/Spring IRI

- **Exemption Status:** The student is exempt based on their most recent ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Screener proficiency levels, and by their first date of enrollment in a U.S. school. The “Opt-out of Fall/Spring Exemption” is marked as “no” in the IRI Exemption column (ELMS > EL Student Summary List > IRI Exemption Column).
- **IRI Participation:** The school decides to have the student participate in the fall and spring IRI assessments.
- **Istation Access:** The student continues to have access to all Istation progress monitoring assessments and interventions to support their literacy development.
- **Impact on School Accountability:** Although the student participates in the fall/spring IRI, their performance scores are not used for school accountability purposes.
- **IRI-Based Funding:** The school is not eligible to receive IRI-based literacy funding for the student but remains eligible for enrollment-based literacy funding.

Option 2: Assessment Exempt English Learner Does Not Participate in Fall/Spring IRI

- **Exemption Status:** The student is exempt based on their most recent ACCESS for ELLs or WIDA Screener proficiency levels, and by their first date of enrollment in a U.S. school. The “Opt-out of Fall/Spring Exemption” is marked as “no” in the IRI Exemption column (ELMS > EL Student Summary List > IRI Exemption Column).
- **IRI Participation:** The school decides not to have the student participate in the fall or spring IRI assessments.
- **Istation Access:** The student continues to have access to all Istation progress monitoring assessments and interventions to support their literacy development.
- **Impact on School Accountability:** No fall/spring IRI performance scores are recorded for the student, and school accountability is not impacted.
- **IRI-Based Funding:** The school is not eligible to receive IRI-based literacy funding for the student but remains eligible for enrollment-based literacy funding.

Option 3: School Opts English Learner Out from the Assessment Exemption

- **Exemption Status:** The school has opted the student out of the assessment exemption. The “Opt-out of Fall/Spring Exemption” is marked as “yes” in the IRI Exemption column (ELMS > EL Student Summary List > IRI Exemption Column).

- **IRI Participation:** The student must participate in the fall and spring IRI assessments.
- **Istation Access:** The student continues to have access to all Istation progress monitoring assessments and interventions to support their literacy development.
- **Impact on Accountability:** The student's performance scores on the IRI will be used for school accountability.
- **IRI-Based Funding:** The school is eligible to receive IRI-based literacy funding for the student and remains eligible for enrollment-based literacy funding.

APPENDIX E: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACCESS for ELLs Online

ACCESS Online is the default summative ELP assessment administered in Idaho. ACCESS for ELLs Online (ACCESS Online) is a computer-based, adaptive test that is delivered through the secure DRC INSIGHT web application. Each language domain is scored automatically by either the test platform or by the test vendor's trained student response evaluators. ELs in grades 1-3 complete the Writing domain of ACCESS Online via paper.

ACCESS for ELLs Paper

ACCESS for ELLs Paper (ACCESS Paper) is a paper-based test available to ELs who are unable to complete ACCESS Online. The Speaking domain is administered individually and is scored by a certified Test Administrator on-site. The listening, reading, and writing domains are scored by the test vendor after the paper test materials are successfully received.

Accountability

Accountability refers to a transparent system that shows how well students in Idaho, at the school, district (LEA), and state levels, are performing. Student early literacy indicators are assessed through the Idaho Reading Indicator in the fall and spring. The Idaho Department of Education reports IRI overall scores for school and districts on the state Report Card.

Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic Assessments are designed to extract precise information about students' specific skills and knowledge to inform instructional interventions. Diagnostic assessments may be given at any time and can differ by student depending on the specific skills an educator is trying to assess.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia refers to a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.

English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)

The English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) is Idaho's standardized test designed to measure an English Learner's proficiency in the English language. ELPA results are used to evaluate the language skills of students who are non-native English speakers, particularly those who are learning English as a second or additional language. ELPA assess various language domains, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, to determine a test taker's ability to understand and communicate effectively in English.

English Learner

English Learner, formerly English Language Learner as defined by ESEA is an EL as an individual:

- who is aged 3 through 21;
- who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
 - who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
 - who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant;
- whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet State academic standards.

Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI)

The Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) is an assessment tool used in the state of Idaho to measure the reading skills of students in kindergarten through third grade. The assessment is administered twice annually to gauge students' proficiency in foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension.

Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs

Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs (Kindergarten ACCESS) is a paper-based test and is individually administered to kindergarten students by a certified Test Administrator. The Test Administrator scores all language domains at the time it is given. Each Kindergarten ACCESS test takes approximately 30 – 60 minutes.

Newcomer

Newcomer typically refers to a student who has recently arrived in the country and is new to the English language and American school system. These students may have a very beginning English proficiency and often require specialized support and instruction to help them acclimate to their new environment and succeed academically.

Opaque Languages

Opaque Languages are languages that are characterized by inconsistent and unpredictable relationships between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). These irregularities pose challenges for phonetic decoding, as learners cannot always rely on consistent rules to pronounce words accurately.

Transparent Languages

Transparent Languages are languages where there is a consistent and predictable relationship between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) such as Spanish, Italian, or Somali. This means that words are pronounced as they are written with few exceptions.

WIDA

WIDA is an organization that focuses on supporting the academic language development of multilingual learners. WIDA provides research-based resources, assessments, and professional development opportunities for educators working with English language learners (ELLs) and multilingual students. Idaho is a member of the WIDA Consortium and has adopted the WIDA ELD Standards Framework and employs the ACCESS for ELLs suite of assessments for English language proficiency screening and monitoring.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS

WIDA Alternate ACCESS (Alt. ACCESS) is a summative paper-based English language proficiency assessment that is administered to children who have been identified as English learners, and who have met the [Idaho Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria](#). All parts of the assessment are scored at the time the assessment is given.

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is an adaptive paper-and-pencil ELP screener given to potential ELs newly enrolled in Kindergarten through first semester grade 1. WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is one tool used during the EL identification process. WIDA Screener for Kindergarten is scored at the time the screener is administered by the Test Administrator. After the screener is completed, the Test Administrator uses the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Score Calculator to calculate a student's English language proficiency.