Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures

Minnesota Language Survey

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Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedure

Minnesota Language Survey

Minnesota is home to speakers of more than 100 different languages. The ability to speak and understand multiple languages is valued. Determination of the home language is the first step in identification of an English learner.

This guidance describes district procedures for administering the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) to all enrolling students. This will allow a uniform and consistent method for identifying potential English Learners (ELs) throughout the state. The document includes an overview of the Minnesota Language Survey and a guide to administering the survey. All districts and charter schools must use the Minnesota statewide EL procedures and criteria.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) establishes that all states implement standardized, statewide entrance and exit procedures for English Learners (ELs). The information below provides districts and charter schools (hereafter referred to as district or districts) with specific steps they must follow in order to comply with federal law and to assure that the students who are in need of English language services are accurately identified.

Who should use this section?

All staff involved in the process of enrolling new students in the district must adhere to this guidance. The Minnesota Department of Education has developed this document on the Minnesota Language Survey procedure for identifying students eligible for language instruction education programs. Staff with responsibility for enrollment may differ from district to district. Personnel could work at enrollment centers or schools, and may include enrollment center staff, cultural liaisons, EL teachers, EL paraprofessionals, and other support staff. All staff should be trained in cultural competency in working with parents and guardians who come from a variety of countries, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds.

The Minnesota Language Survey asks all parents and guardians upon enrollment of their students in Minnesota public schools to respond to four questions regarding the language use of their student. The student's language is part of the district's data that is communicated to the state. The information provided by the parent and guardians is confidential and must only be shared with district staff who need the information to identify students eligible for English language development programs.

Completion of the Minnesota Language Survey

All parents and guardians enrolling a new student in the district must be provided the Minnesota Language Survey. Enrollment staff must not make assumptions about a student's language background based upon the student's appearance, last or first name, ethnic background, religious background and/or parent's language ability. To stay in compliance with state and federal law, all students must have a completed language survey on file.

If the child was already enrolled in a preschool program, the parents or guardians may have completed the MNLS during that enrollment process. If the MNLS is not on file, the parent or guardian must complete it. Review the MNLS in the student's folder to ensure that it is complete.

The Minnesota Language Survey does not collect information about immigration status nor does it determine what services the student should receive. All information provided by the parent or guardian is confidential and will be used only to provide legally-required data for state records. It should not be shared with any district staff except those with an educational need for the information.

All districts must use the current version of the Minnesota Language Survey and follow established Minnesota's procedures to ensure compliance with both federal and state law. The Minnesota Language Survey must be used exactly as provided by MDE with no additional questions or edits. If additional information is needed by the district, it may be included in other places within the enrollment packet. The Minnesota Language Survey must be distinguishable from the rest of the enrollment packet. Once the student's language has been recorded in the district's data system, the Minnesota Language Survey should be kept in the student's cumulative folder.

Online Enrollment

If registration occurs online, the Minnesota Language Survey should be on a different colored screen or on an individual screen by itself. Once the form has been uploaded, it should be reviewed by the enrollment staff to ensure that the MNLS has allowed parents and guardians to answer in a similar manner to the paper form; the adoption of the paper form to the computer has not changed the meaning or the requirements of the form.

Translation, Interpretation and the TransACT Portal

If the parent or guardian does not understand English or is unable to fill out the form in English or another language, the district has a legal obligation to have an interpreter present or translation available. Districts may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents. Oral interpretation or oral reading of the Minnesota Language Survey is acceptable. The Minnesota Department of Education has available the MNLS into the following languages: English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Karen-Pwo, Karen-Sgaw, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese- Mandarin, Russian, Oromo, Amharic, Lao, French, Swahili, Nepali, Telugu, Karenni, Hindi, and Khmer. These documents are available on the TransACT website. To access the TransACT website TransACT.com follow the directions to register. Parent notifications required under ESSA are available free of charge to staff in all Minnesota districts and charter school

Parental Rights

Compliance with this request for information is voluntary. If a parent or guardian does not want to complete the form, the district should note in the student's cumulative folder that the parent does not wish to identify language use for their student. At this point in the procedure, the district should have identified a staff member who will discuss with the parent the reason behind the use of the MNLS and its ability to provide assistance in recognizing students who might qualify for English language services; therefore, better serving the student and their needs. If the parent still refuses to complete the MNLS,

the district should document the parental refusal in the student's cumulative folder. For additional details see: [Parent/guardian rights in completion of the Minnesota Language Survey](#)

Staff Considerations

Those who administer the Minnesota Language Survey must have a thorough understanding of the purpose and processes for its administration. Any staff that will administer the language survey should be trained on the initial identification process and the survey's administration procedures.   Relevant staff might include: district registration staff, district support staff, school support staff, or a school-based EL teacher. The district might also need an interpreter to assist the parent/guardian or use a translated MNLS. Depending upon the size of the district, the district might appoint a staff person who is responsible for working with parents on understanding the purpose of the MNLS, resolving errors on the MNLS, including discrepant or omitted data, and explaining the English language development program.

Timeline

For students enrolling at the beginning of the school year, the Minnesota Language Survey and the screening must take place within 30 days of enrollment. For students enrolling in the middle of the school year, the EL Identification process must occur within 10 days of enrollment.

Next Step: English Learner Identification

When a language other than English is identified on the Minnesota Language Survey, district staff responsible for student placement should review the student's previous school documents to determine if a student was classified as an English learner. Depending upon the grade level (grades 1-12) of the student enrolling, and if the student is transferring from another Minnesota district having completed spring semester, the student should have an ACCESS 2.0 score report. The district can use the results of the score to determine English language program placement. If the student is transferring from a school out of state or does not have a current ACCESS 2.0 score, the student should be screened for English language proficiency.

If the student had not been enrolled in a Minnesota public school, and has a language use other than English, the student should go to the second step of the process Identification of an English learner. If a student is new to the country, and based upon the MNLS, the student should go to the second step of the process and be screened for English language proficiency. As mentioned above, the student will then have their academic English language proficiency assessed using the required assessments.

Grade Level	Required Assessment
KG	W-APT or Model
1-12	ACCESS Screener- Online or paper

More information about EL identification can be found on MDE's website or by emailing mde.el@state.mn.us

Completing the Minnesota Language Survey

Below are the steps to completing the MNLS. All steps should be included, but the order of the steps could differ based on local context or enrollment situation. Refer to the checklist in Appendix C for further considerations.

Step 1: Preparation with the parent.

Using the MNLS Decision Tree (Appendix B), begin assisting the parent or guardian who is enrolling a new student in the district. Ask the parent or guardian if they need language assistance. If the parent or guardian needs language assistance in understanding the process or the MNLS, locate an interpreter and/or a translated Minnesota Language Survey. It is the district's responsibility to ensure that the process is transparent and accessible to the parent, guardian and student. If the parent or guardian is unable to complete the information, the district staff must provide support with filling out the form.

Review the Appendix B statements to determine if a new Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) needs to be completed.

Step 2: Preview the form.

During the enrollment process of all new students to the district, have the parents or guardians read the Minnesota Language Survey. See Appendix A for the Minnesota Language Survey.

You could say, "Please read the form. If you have questions or need additional assistance, I will help you. If you need an interpreter, we will provide one for you. Please read the entire form". Move your hand across the entire document and point to the paragraph found at the top of the Minnesota Language Survey.

Step 3: Fill in the form.

After allowing the parent of guardian time to review the MNLS, Instruct the parent or guardian to fill out the student information.

A. You could say, "Write your student's full name"
B. District staff should fill in the student identification number or birthdate.

C. Ask the parent of guardian to provide language information for the student. Ask the parent to read the first statement and then complete it by checking the phrase that best describes their student's language use. You could say, "Complete the statement by checking the phrase that best describes your student."

D. If a "language other than English" or "English and languages other than English" is checked, ask the parent or guardian to write the name of the language in the box on the right. You could say, "Please write the name of the language in the box on the right".

E. Repeat the procedure for statements 2, 3, and 4.

F. Ask the parent or guardian to review their responses and see if they have any questions. You could say, "Please review your responses." Give the person time to review them. Then ask, "Do you have any questions?" Answer their questions.

G. Have the parent or guardian complete the parent and guardian information. You could say, "Please print your name and sign the form. Put today's date in the box".

Step 4: Checking the form.

Using the checklist (Appendix C), the staff member should review the completed Minnesota Language Survey to determine that the form is completed. If any information is incomplete, ask the parent or guardian to write it on the form.

Step 5: Interpreting the results.

If a box has been checked and the right column contains a language other than English, the student must be assessed for English language proficiency using the grade-appropriate WIDA screener or W-APT. If only English is checked in each of the boxes in the middle column, or if English is the only language written on the right, the student does not have to be assessed.

Step 6: Student information system.

The language should be noted in the district's student information system. The language survey should be placed in the cumulative folder of each student.

Examples

Examples are for illustrative purposes only.

Example 1:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	_v_ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Spanish
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. _v_ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Spanish
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. _v_ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Spanish
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. _v_ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Spanish

Result: This student should be screened for English language proficiency.

Example 2:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	_v_ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Hmong
2. My student speaks:	__ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _v__ only English.	English
3. My student understands:	__ language(s) other than English. __v_ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Hmong, English
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	_v_ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Hmong, English

Result: Student should be screened for English language proficiency.

Example 3:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	

Result: This student should NOT be screened for English language proficiency.

If there is any doubt about a child's language ability in English, the child should be screened for English language proficiency.

Example 4:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	_√_ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	Somali
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _√_ only English.	

Result: Student should be screened for English language proficiency.

Example 5:

	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	__ language(s) other than English. __X_ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	ASL, English
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _v_ only English.	ASL
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _v_ only English.	ASL, English
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. _v_ only English.	ASL

Result: ASL

Do not screen. Be sure that special education department is aware of student's enrollment and appropriate identification is made.

Special Cases

Pre-Kindergarten Students

If the district has a voluntary Pre-K or school readiness program, the parent or guardian should be asked to complete the Minnesota Language Survey during enrollment into the Pre-K program. Pre-K students qualify as ELs based on identifying a language other than English on the Minnesota Language Survey. Since no WIDA screener currently exists that can document English ability at this early age, teachers and parents should work together to ensure that if a child speaks a language other than English they are observed for language use. WIDA is currently developing a screener for Pre-K use; however, it has not yet been released for use.

Voluntary Pre-K Students

If a child has been identified in voluntary Pre-K or school readiness program as having a language other than English, and a MNLS is in the student's file, parents and guardians do not need to fill out a "new" or additional MNLS in their enrollment into Kindergarten. During enrollment into Kindergaren, these students who have a MNLS filled out identifying a language other than English should be screened using either the W-APT or Model screener.

International Students

Parents, guardians or host families of international students should complete the Minnesota Language Survey for their student using the steps described above.

Data Anomalies

If responses on the Minnesota Language Survey data are unclear or contradictory, the district should have a procedure for the review of the information and a meeting with the parents to discuss the responses.

In general, the student's home language does not change. However, if an error occurred upon initial enrollment, every effort should be made to ascertain the correct language background of the student.

International Adoption

If the parent or guardian completes a form indicating a language other than English, the student should be screened. If needed, the district should provide a staff member who is trained to further discuss the language use of the student.

Students with Disabilities

If a child has a known disability, it is possible that parents will indicate that their child does not speak or use a language. In this situation, the district should record the parents' language as the child's primary language with a brief explanation of the situation.

Sign Language as a Home Language

If the home language is American Sign Language, the parent or guardian must complete a MNLS form by answering the questions according to the prescribed procedure. This includes hearing students with ASL as a home language, as well as deaf students with hearing parents or guardians. Additionally, some deaf students who speak ASL may have hearing parents who speak languages other than English.

Changes on the Responses to the Minnesota Language Survey

Changes on the responses to the MNLS can be made if the parent or guardian has made a mistake or mismarked the form. Be sure to document the error/mismarking and place the corrected Minnesota Language Survey in the student's cumulative folder.

Students who already have a Minnesota Language Survey

Using the flow chart in Appendix B, the district through a series of statements can determine if a new MNLS should be completed. A district can use the results of any other version of the MNLS, but may not administer any other version of the MNLS. In many cases, a student with an MNLS with a language other than English has already been screened for English language proficiency and either received EL services or does not require EL services.

Students who have a conflicting Minnesota Language Survey

There are students who have an MNLS from a previous Minnesota district indicating a primary language other than English, but the enrolling parent or guardian complete a Minnesota Language Survey upon enrollment in the new district with English only statements. In-take staff should have a procedure that allows the district's EL staff to interview the parent/guardian and address the conflict.

Creolized English

English creoles such as Nigerian English, Liberian English, or Jamaican Patois should be recorded the home primary language. Speakers of English creoles should be screened. This does not include dialects such as British English.

Parent/guardian rights in completion of the Minnesota Language Survey

Parents or guardians have the right to decline to respond to the Minnesota Language Survey. If they choose not to respond, the district must add to the MNLS a note that the enrolling parent/guardian declined to fill it out. The district should have a procedure that allows EL staff or others within the district to discuss the effects of the refusal with the parent or guardian. Some talking points include:

- It is in the best interests of the student for the district to understand the language background. The MNLS is a critical part in a larger piece that allows the districts and schools to understanding how best to serve the student.

- Language can be scaffolded in the classroom for the student to understand the academic language.

- English language programs allows the student to learn English so they will be better able to access the academic curriculum.

- Furthermore, students may receive additional language services when needed to support development of language alongside academic content learning.

- Without the MNLS, the district can only make an approximation of the language needs of a student. Without a more specific response to the MNLS, the student might not be able to successfully meet the language demands in the classroom; leading to frustration and poor academic performance.

Minnesota Language Survey

Minnesota is home to speakers of more than 100 different languages. The ability to speak and understand multiple languages is valued. The information you provide will be used by the school district to see if your student is multilingual. In Minnesota, students who are multilingual may qualify for a Multilingual Seal upon further assessment. Additionally, the information you provide will determine if your student should take an English proficiency test. Based upon the results of the test, your student may be entitled to English language development instruction. **Access to instruction is required by federal and state law. As a parent or guardian, you have the right to decline English Learner instruction at any time.** Every enrolling student must be provided with the Minnesota Language Survey during enrollment. Information requested on this form is important to us to be able to serve your student. Your assistance in completing the Minnesota Language Survey is greatly appreciated.

Student Information	
Student's Full Name: (Last, First, Middle)	Birthdate or Student ID:

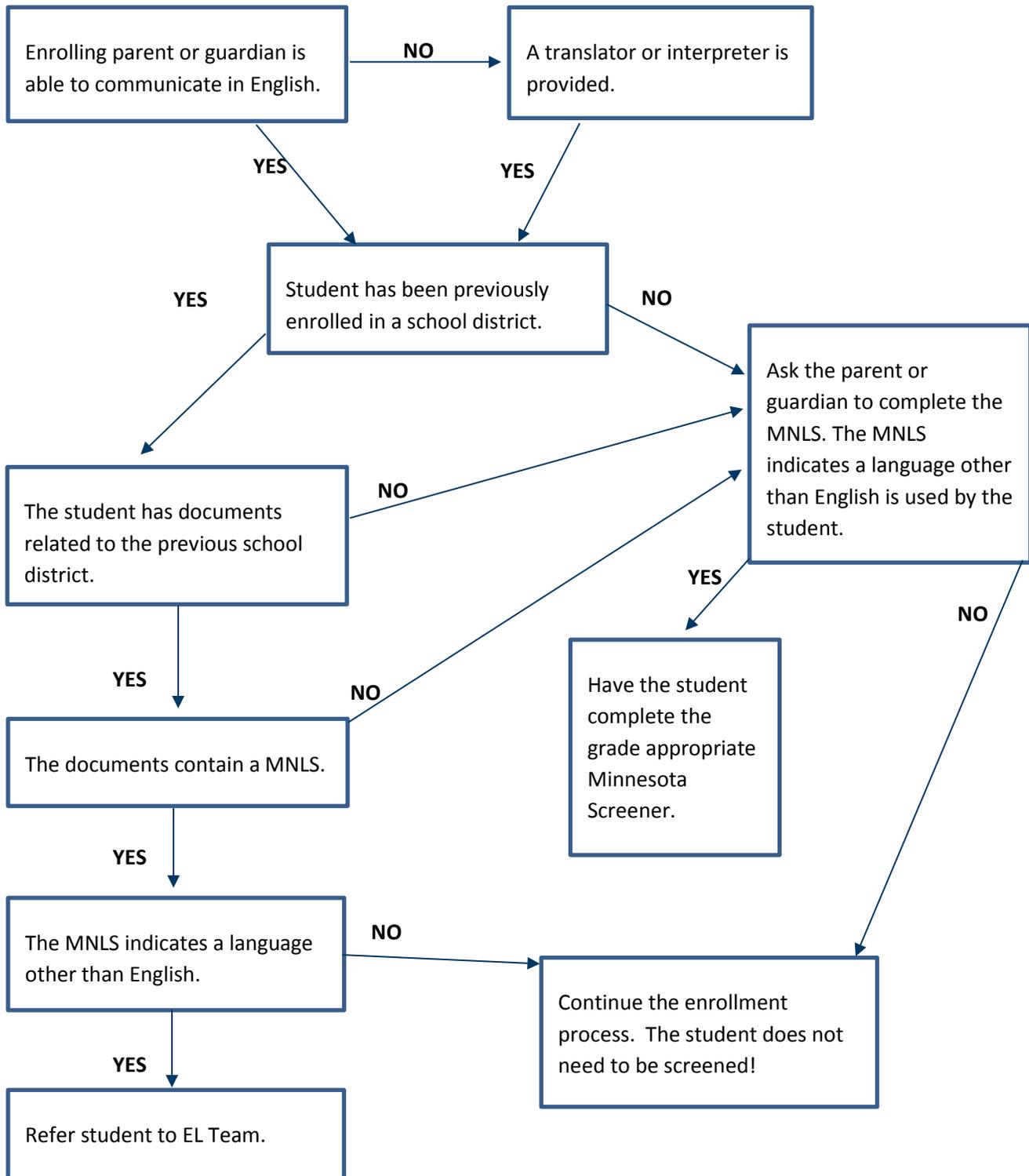|	Check the phrase that best describes your student:	Indicate the language(s) other than English in space provided:
1. My student first learned:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
2. My student speaks:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
3. My student understands:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	
4. My student has consistent interaction in:	___ language(s) other than English. ___ English and language(s) other than English. ___ only English.	

Language use alone does not identify your student as an English learner. If a language other than English is indicated, your student will be screened for English language proficiency.

Parent/ Guardian Information	
Parent/Guardian Name (printed):	
Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:

* All data on this form is private. It will only be shared with district staff who need the information to best serve your student and for legally required reporting about home language and service eligibility to the Minnesota Department of Education. At the district and at the Minnesota Department of Education, this information will not be shared with other individuals or entities, except if they are authorized by state or federal law to access the information. Compliance with this request for information is voluntary.

Appendix B: Minnesota Language Survey Decision Tree

Purpose: Identify a student who should be screened for English language proficiency.

Enrolling parent or guardian is able to communicate in English.

NO →

A translator or interpreter is provided.

YES

YES

Student has been previously enrolled in a school district.

YES

NO

The student has documents related to the previous school district.

NO

Ask the parent or guardian to complete the MNLS. The MNLS indicates a language other than English is used by the student.

YES

YES

NO

Have the student complete the grade appropriate Minnesota Screener.

The documents contain a MNLS.

YES

NO

The MNLS indicates a language other than English.

NO

Continue the enrollment process. The student does not need to be screened!

YES

Refer student to EL Team.

Appendix C: Minnesota Language Survey Checklist

Review of the Minnesota Language Survey

Follow the steps to review the MNLS of an enrolling student. After the parent or guardian has completed the MNLS, review the answers to ensure that the form has been completed successfully.

☐ The student's full name (last, first and middle) is recorded.

☐ The student's identification number/birth date is recorded

☐ The student's identification number is correct.

☐ The parent or guardian has checked a box in each of the four statements.

☐ The parent or guardian has listed a language(s) for each of the four statements.

☐ The parent or guardian has printed their name.

☐ The parent or guardian has signed the form.

☐ The parent or guardian has filled in the date.

☐ The parent or guardian has checked a box indicating that the student uses a language(s) other than English for any of the four statements. Go to *Screener.

☐ The parent or guardian has checked the box indicating that the student uses only English in ALL FOUR statements.

☐ The parent or guardian has listed English in the boxes indicating that the student uses only English in ALL FOUR statements.

☐ The student should NOT be screened for English language proficiency.

*Screener:

☐ The parent or guardian has listed a language(s) other than English for any of the four statements.

☐ The student must be screened for English language proficiency.

☐ Administer the WIDA Screener appropriate for the student.

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