



BASIC ORAL LANGUAGE SCREENING TEST (BOLST):

Staff Handbook

Program Year 2026-27

INTRODUCTION

The Basic Oral Language Screening Test (BOLST) is the statewide assessment to screen the basic oral language skills of migrant eligible Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and to assess their growth from the beginning to the end of a period of instruction from pre- to post-testing. This assessment is also designed to be a guide to help the educator understand where to start with instruction and what skill areas need additional support, alongside the expressed needs of the student. Educators should observe their student's English language skills throughout the assessment, and use the assessment results and observations to inform future instructional planning for each student.

WHEN TO ADMINISTER THE BOLST

The BOLST should be administered to Out-of-School Youth (OSY) who are receiving regular English instruction from a Migrant Education Program (MEP) educator. Educators should administer a BOLST pre-test before starting to deliver regular instruction to an OSY, and then in each subsequent calendar year. A BOLST post-test should be administered toward the end of each calendar year, or before a student departs who has been receiving regular English language instruction. A set number of instructional hours is not required in order to administer a BOLST post-test. Keep these tips in mind when deciding when to administer the BOLST:

- Administer a BOLST pre-test to new OSY on your caseload who are receiving regular instruction. Administer a pre-test to all OSY on your caseload who are receiving regular instruction at the beginning of each calendar year (in or around September.)
- Administer a BOLST post-test at the end of each calendar year (in or around August,) or before an OSY student departs from your area. You can use the BOLST post-test that you administer in August as the student's pre-test score for the following year.
- If a student receives a perfect score of 40 on the pre-test or post-test, **use Version 2** of the BOLST the next time that you administer a pre- or post-test.
- The administration of the BOLST is not a service recorded in Web App, but any follow-up instruction provided to the student based on the BOLST results can be recorded.

HOW TO ADMINISTER THE BOLST

The BOLST may be administered to students in-person or virtually. The following materials are available to educators to facilitate the administration of the assessment:

- BOLST Assessment Form and Scoring Sheet with Graphics (required)
- BOLST Graphics and Audio PowerPoint (optional)
- BOLST Assessment Form Version 2 (optional for students who scored out of Version 1)

If administering the BOLST in-person, make sure to have one BOLST Assessment Form and Scoring Sheet printed for each student. Print at least one copy of the graphics, or use a device to display the BOLST Graphics and Audio PowerPoint. If administering the BOLST virtually, you can print and fill out the assessment form by hand, or use the fillable form on your device. Meet with your OSY on Zoom, or another platform where you can share your screen to display the graphic sheets or PowerPoint slides.

Section 1: INTRODUCTIONS AND GREETINGS (4 possible points)

To establish rapport and to put the student at ease, begin the assessment by asking these questions in a friendly and informal manner. Repeat each question at least two times. If the student cannot answer one question, proceed to the next question. If the student demonstrates understanding of the question and responds accordingly in any language, award one point per question. This section is evaluating the student's receptive *listening* skills. Some tips for administering Section 1 include:

- Although Section 1 is a scored section of the assessment, use this opportunity to put students at ease and to get to know them. If the student does not understand the question in English, feel free to translate into Spanish for purposes of initiating conversation.
- Since you are evaluating the student's listening skills in Section 1, do not award points if you need to translate the questions into Spanish. If the student responds to the English question appropriately in any language, you may award one point per question.

Section 2: AUDITORY COMPREHENSION (6 possible points)

Use the BOLST graphics sheets or the BOLST Graphics and Audio PowerPoint to administer Section 2. For each question in this section, show each set of 3 graphics and ask the questions in English. Repeat each question at least two times, with a pause in between. If the student answers the question correctly verbally, or by pointing to the correct graphic, award one point per question. If the student chooses the incorrect graphic or is unable to answer, award zero

points and proceed to the next question. This section is evaluating the student's receptive **listening** skills. Some tips for administering Section 2 include:

- Be sure to explain to the student that they can answer verbally, or by pointing in this section. A verbal answer is not required to award points in Section 2.
- If the student does not understand the question as written, it is acceptable to reword the question in English. Some alternative phrasings could include "Point to" or "Show me" in place of "Which is."

Section 3: ABILITY TO PRODUCE BASIC LANGUAGE (10 possible points)

Use the BOLST graphics sheets or the BOLST Graphics and Audio PowerPoint for Question 1 and 2 in Section 3. Questions 3 through 5 just require you to read the prompt. Ask each question to the student, repeating each at least twice, with a pause in between. If the student demonstrates understanding by answering correctly in Spanish or mostly in Spanish, award one point. If the student answers the question with one word or a short phrase in English that constitutes a meaningful response, award two points. If the student is unable to answer, or answers in a way that does not demonstrate understanding, award zero points and proceed to the next question. This section is evaluating the student's receptive **listening** and productive **speaking** skills. Some tips for administering Section 3 include:

- If the student does not understand the question as written, it is acceptable to reword the question in English. Some alternative phrasings could include "What work do you do?" for Question 3, and "Where do you go grocery shopping?" for Question 4.
- One-word or short responses that are fully in English in this section can receive a full two points. For example, "Sleeping" for Question 1, or "I'm from Guatemala" for Question 5 may receive full points. A response that is fully or partially given in Spanish can receive one point. For example, "He is comiendo" for Question 2, or "Trabajo en las manzanas" for Question 3.

Section 4: BEGINNING LITERACY SKILLS (12 possible points)

Use the BOLST graphics sheets or the BOLST Graphics and Audio PowerPoint to for Section 4. For each question, show each individual letter, number, or word. Ask each question in English, and, if necessary, in Spanish. Upon hearing the student's response, the test administrator should circle the individual letters, numbers and/or words that have been spoken correctly in English. Award one point for each correct letter, number, or word. This section is evaluating the student's receptive **reading** and productive **speaking** skills. Some tips for administering Section 4 include:

- If the student does not understand the question as written in English, use the Spanish translation to ask them the question. If the student is able to correctly identify the English name of the letter or number, or correctly pronounce the word, they can receive one point for each.
- *If the student has not received any points after section of the test, or if they have received very minimal points, do not continue to Section 5. You may conclude here.*

Section 5: ABILITY TO PRODUCE EXPANDED RESPONSES AND LANGUAGE (8 possible points)

Ask each question to the student, repeating each at least twice. If the student demonstrates understanding by answering correctly in Spanish, or answers correctly with one word in English, award one point. If the student answers the question with an expanded response in English that is appropriate and meaningful, award two points. If the student is unable to answer, or answers in a way that does not demonstrate understanding, award zero points and proceed to the next question. This section is evaluating the student's receptive **listening** and productive **speaking** skills. Some tips for administering Section 5 include:

- If the student does not understand the question as written, it is acceptable to reword the question in English. An alternative phrasing could include "What job do you want to do in the future?" for Question 4.
- One-word or short responses in English, or responses that are given in Spanish that demonstrate understanding of the question, can be awarded one point. For example, "Chicken, good!" or "Me gusta el pollo porque es delicioso" for Question 3.
- Expanded responses in English can be awarded two points. For example "I like chicken because it is delicious" for Question 3.
- If a student does not respond to the question, or responds with an answer that is not relevant to the question, do not award points.
- ***If you are using Version 1 of the BOLST, the test concludes after Section 5. If your student has previously received a perfect score on Version 1 of the BOLST, and you are administering Version 2, move on to the Bonus Section now.***

Bonus Section: ABILITY TO PRODUCE EXPANDED RESPONSES TO OTHER VERB TENSES (10 pts.)

Ask each question to the student, repeating each at least twice. If the student demonstrates understanding by answering correctly in Spanish, or answers correctly with one word in English, award one point. If the student answers the question with an expanded response in English that is appropriate and meaningful, award two points. If the student is unable to answer, or answers in a way that does not demonstrate understanding, award zero points for that question.