## ESSA English Learners (ELs) Focus Group Meeting
### October 6, 2016, 3:30 p.m. (in-person); October 13 (webinar)

During the focus group session on October 6 and a follow-up webinar October 13, Assistant Superintendent Amy Maisterra shared a presentation on key provisions in ESSA relating to ELs. The focus group broke into three smaller subgroups to gather in-depth feedback from LEA leaders, practitioners, and national experts on three key EL policy areas where the new law requires new policy considerations. OSSE will incorporate this feedback into DC's state ESSA plan. Note that no final decisions were made in this meeting or follow-up webinar. Below you will find a summary of the discussion based on points raised by various participants.

| Area Discussed | Summary of Discussion | Next Steps & Follow Up (if applicable) |
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| **1. ELP Standards and Assessments:**<br><br>a. Should DC continue use of the current WIDA standards and use of the WIDA Access for ELLs for accountability purposes under ESSA? If not, what other valid/ reliable standards/assessments should we use? | • WIDA standards<br>  - Standards are not like CCSS, rather, they are more like "descriptions" of proficiency. They are written as simple one sentence statements, very broad, whereas CCSS offers several areas within with content to focus on.<br>  - Standards do not give teachers a clear understanding of what students at different ELP levels can do.<br>  - Standards are useful at the elementary level, but not as useful with older teens at ELP levels 1-2, because they do not give enough information about what older beginning and mid-level students can do and how to support them to grow more in their language development.<br>  - OSSE conducts a "needs assessment" asking LEA leaders their needs to serve EL students, and one question asks about the LEAs' understanding of the standards. Responses may not accurately gauge teachers' needs.<br>  - **LEA leaders and teachers desire much more training around the standards, what they are, how to use them for their EL instruction, how to speak about them to administrators and classroom teachers**. Annual training (currently provided to some but not all LEAs with significant EL populations) is insufficient.<br>• WIDA ACCESS for ELLs<br>  - WIDA only provides limited info on what students can do. Teachers need more support on how to understand what to do with a students' ACCESS score and how to link the ACCESS score with academic content expectations. | Major Points:<br>Continue use of WIDA.<br><br>If we keep WIDA standards, and, by extension, ACCESS, LEA staff require extensive and continuous training on how to utilize these WIDA products. |

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| | - Secondary educators want an assessment that gives insight into programmatic shifts for particular ages and levels. They prefer an assessment that yields scores that more readily lend themselves to planning for older learners. | |
| b. When to Include Newcomer EL (12 months or less in U.S. schools) in PARCC ELA tests and accountability?<br><br>Under ESSA, States are given two options:<br><br>OPTION #1: States may exclude recently arrived ELs from one administration of PARCC ELA assessments. Newcomer ELs must still take math and ACCESS ELP tests, but results will not be included in accountability for their first year. During their second year, all ELs' test proficiency must be included in all assessments and accountability.<br><br>OPTION #2: States must test and report on the performance in math and PARCC ELA for each year of enrollment in a school, but:<br>• In the 1st year: exclude recently arrived ELs' math and ELA test results from the school's accountability determinations;<br>• In the 2nd year: include | • Option 1<br>　- Pros:<br>　　o New students/students with limited skills cannot perform against English proficient students on high stakes tests; participation on these tests is too frustrating for them.<br>　　o PARCC ELA results are likely not valid/ unreliable for students at low ELP levels.<br>　　o DC already uses Option 1 so this is easiest to implement.<br>　- Con: Including EL students' proficiency in PARCC ELA testing and accountability in the second year is likely too soon, and schools in the accountability system.<br><br>• Option 2<br>　- Pros:<br>　　o This option is better for accountability.<br>　　o This option allows you to get baseline data and sort of something to work with; growth measures are not meaningful if you do not have a baseline.<br>　　o Although participation is frustrating for the students, they have to take math (and science) anyway in their first year in the US, so just give them the R/LA test to measure their growth.<br>　- Con:<br>　　o EL subgroup can be a transient population; this holds particularly true for secondary students (socio-emotional factors, dropping out, family obligations, legal removals from US, etc.).<br>　　o There is nothing to compare their scores to if they leave after a year. If a significant number of students leave the school, it will be difficult to implement the growth model.<br>• Option 3<br>　- Group felt that if there could be a third option, this would "solve everything".<br>　- The group's proposed option would exclude newcomers at ELP levels 1 and 2, but newcomers level 3 and above could participate in the assessments. | Major points:<br>Group idealizes a hybrid option that assesses more proficient newcomers in their first 12 months in the US.<br><br>U.S. Department of Education's proposed accountability regulations (34 CFR § 200.16(b)(3) and (4)) would allow a hybrid approach of Options 1 and 2, in which a statewide uniform procedure would be used to decide which students would use Option 1 or 2 based on grade, ELP level, time in EL instruction, native language procedure, and time in formal education.<br><br>If this hybrid option is allowed when regulations are finalized, OSSE can consult research experts to establish a differentiated, statewide uniform procedure for when to include newcomers in PARCC ELA assessments. |

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| a measure of recently arrived ELs' academic growth in those determinations; and <br> • In the 3rd year and beyond, include a measure of recently arrived ELs' proficiency in those determinations. <br><br> Current Status: DC uses Option 1 because we do not use a "growth model" for content accountability. <br><br> c. Should OSSE choose option 1 or 2? What are pros and cons of including newcomer ELs in assessments and accountability in the first or second year? | | |
| **2. EL Entry and Exit Procedures** <br> a. Are our current entry procedures sufficient? Are they clear across LEAs? How can entry procedures be consistent across all LEAs and ensure ELs are pre-screened and provided services in a timely manner, in accordance with the 30-day identification requirement? | • Entry Criteria <br> - Not all LEAs were clear on entry procedures. <br> - The criteria do need to be standardized across the state. A student may transfer schools within a state early in the school year and get screened twice. That student may end up with two very different ELP scores if the screening tools and procedures are not standardized. <br> - The required 30-day timeline after identification is difficult to provide services, but moving the ACCESS timeline from April to February should help. <br><br> • Recommend modifications to Home Language Survey (HLS) and EL Entry procedures <br> - HLS is somewhat helpful to identify students who may need screening for EL services, but there appears to be a need for including additional questions <br>     o Consider modifying the HLS to gather data on home language proficiency and if the child actually communicates in another language | • OSSE EL guidebook will be revised and updated |

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| | at home |
| | - Entry process may need to include additional steps: |
| |     o In addition to the HLS, there may be a need for a step, prior to the administration of HLS, that outlines the process |
| |     o A template or a letter from OSSE that walks parents through the process, including an explanation of what happens after the screening and what services will be provided to their child if he/she is found to have a need for EL services. In such letters or template, consider including contact info of OSSE staff who parents may contact for additional information or when they have questions |
| |     o Some parents of children identified as EL were upset that they needed to take the pre-screener afterward. |
| | - Consider providing additional supports to distinguish between language development and language acquisition needs for dually identified students (EL and SWD) |
| | - Long-term EL issue: |
| |     o Whether these students are benefitting from extended EL services will also need to be considered |
| |     o In developing long-term goals in the statewide accountability system, this is an area that needs to be considered |
| | • Push for more/better screeners in Pre-K settings |
| b. Should we include additional objective, standardized, valid, and reliable exit criteria? What could those be? | • The criteria and procedures need to change: Exit criteria need extra criteria |
| | - Students should only be exited at Tier C, not A or B. |
| | - Consider an eligibility process to determine exit similar to what is done to determine eligibility for special education |
| |     o using multiple criteria and data sources and adverse effects, to make determination |
| |     o ESSA requirement to standardize exit criteria is an opportunity for OSSE to think about EL proficiency |
| | - Consider different exit criteria/procedures for elementary and secondary students or keep distinctions between elementary and secondary in mind if revising exit criteria/procedures (need to look at growth, especially for the secondary grades. If they come in at a level 1 it may difficult for them to get to |

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| | a level 5 in order to be exited.)<br>- Consider composite of WIDA and literacy (reading/writing)<br>- Avoid teacher/administrator judgment | |
| **3. ELP Indicator and Accountability System**<br>a. How much weight should be given to the ELP indicator within the full accountability system? | • ELP indicator should have a low weight (10% may be too high)<br>- Low weight because: concern that WIDA should not be used for high stakes testing<br>- Low weight because: Could discourage schools from supporting ELs. Want to be sure schools welcome and support ELs><br>- Low weight because: especially high-mobility population<br>- Consider measuring growth and putting more weight on growth than proficiency<br>- Consider adding bonus points for growth in native language proficiency<br><br>• With a lower n-size trigger than the current 25, more schools would be counted in accountability for ELPs.<br>- The group was interested in a level of 15.<br>- There are privacy and security concerns on lower levels that would need to be addressed. | |
| b. Long-term goals and timeline toward proficiency<br>How many years should be DC's expected timeline for ELs to achieve English proficiency, based on your experiences or knowledge of ELs, and what should we consider? | • 5-7 years<br>- 5 years is a great goal<br>- Consider being flexible to account for wide variability in population<br>- Give special consideration to ELs with disabilities | |

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| c. Measurements of interim progress toward proficiency<br><br>What should our progress/growth goals look like?<br><br>This is similar to AMAO 1 – growth - under NCLB. How should we modify this to reflect the true trajectory of language and take into account individual student level factors? | • Consider setting project metrics that vary by ELP level (0.6 metric doesn't make sense across the levels)<br>    - OSSE used to set different goals for ELP levels to account for the fact that the assessment is such that levels 1 & 2 improve at a faster rate than levels 3 & 4.<br><br>• Consider setting different goals by age, grade level or educational level (e.g., elementary versus secondary) | |
| d. Inclusion of former ELs in EL subgroup | • Include former ELs for 4 years?<br>    - Some felt too long<br><br>• Need data transparency if including former ELs in EL subgroup (otherwise, may inflate EL performance if former ELs are included in the EL subgroup)<br>    - May need to decrease N size to disaggregate former and current ELs<br>    - No matter how long we include results in accountability, the group agreed it'd be valuable to provide disaggregated reporting. | |
| For math and reading test accountability in Title I schools, should exited or "former" ELs still be counted within the EL subgroup? If so, for how long (ESSA now allows up to 4 years)? | • Consider including former ELs when measuring proficiency, but only current ELs when measuring growth | |

| General Considerations:<br><br>(As a brainstorming exercise, participants were asked to consider these individually and take/ submit written notes, without public and formal sharing.)<br><br>**1. From your perspective, what do you think is most important for OSSE to consider as we work to develop a new state plan that best supports this population?**<br>**2) Based on the data or what you have heard, what worries you? What does the city need to tackle most urgently?**<br>**3) What is greatest lever for change, in your opinion?**<br>**4) What will success look like for this population?** | • **Most Important consideration for OSSE**<br>- Need assessments that support an older student population<br>- Entry procedures: Testing students in native language & English for placement<br>- Interrupted education<br>- Ensure it's not a one-size-fits-all approach<br>- Ensure maintenance of autonomy<br>- Caution against too much as part of accountability<br>- Focus on resources/PD/PLC<br>- ELP/Grade level standards<br>- Mobility/transience of EL population especially older youth—difficult to measure longitudinal progress at school level<br>- Large number of newcomers and low education levels—typical of immigrant youth and their parents<br>- Consider need for greater literacy in native language<br>- Clarity around identification: Who really is an EL?<br>- Data tracking and progress monitoring: How are we tracking growth and measuring growth before ACCESS?<br>- Clarity around exiting: how do we know they don't need support? What about dually identified?<br>- Growth on WIDA with targets that reflect trajectories variance by proficiency level. Moving from 1.0 to 2.0 may take less time than moving from 3.0 to 4.0<br>- Avoid using multiple exit measure that allow/encourage extra time for ELs to remain classified<br>- Providing additional support/money to make sure that ELP shows growth<br>- Getting feedback and using it<br>- To make sure that the plan is districtwide and not separate (public vs charter)<br><br>• **Most urgent need**<br>- Need supports/resources at the high school level for newcomers<br>- Long-term versus recent immigrants<br>- Low academic levels for ELs<br>- Orientation of policies (standards, assessments, AMAOs) have been very K-12 traditional, but not older youth and alternative programs<br>- The support won't be sufficient for the accountability system: can OSSE adequately support what's needed for schools? If we lower then "n" size to include more schools, will OSSE get more funding? | |

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|  | - Do not include former-ELs in the EL subgroup for accountability<br>- Providing proper training and communication for new ESSA requirements<br>- Exit criteria and monitoring status<br><br>• **Greatest lever for change**<br>- Taking advantage of the shift to Title I funding<br>- Raising more awareness for ELL students with other teachers. Making ELLs the responsibility for all teachers<br>- Integrating ELs' language instruction with academic content—no pullout ESL<br>- Only expand dual immersion programs in schools enrolling high %s of ELLs<br><br>• **Definition of success**<br>- Student who arrives in this country at 13, 14, 15 is as successful as a student who arrives at 6 years old. That all are well prepped/college/career ready<br>- English proficiency sufficient for voc ed programs and college admission without English remediation<br>- To access academic content without additional teacher support<br>- Monitors still receive support |  |

| **Attendee Organizations Represented:** | |
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| Apple Tree PCS | Education Forward DC |
| Bridges PCS | E. L. Haynes PCS |
| Cardozo H.S. | Imagine Hope Lamond PCS |
| Center City PCS | Latin American Youth Center PCS |
| Centro Nia | OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates |
| DC Public Charter School Board | New America Project |
| DC State Board of Education | Next Steps PCS |
|  | Washington Yu Ying PCS |