Delivering Education Services to English Learners

A Guidebook for Administrators, Instructional Leaders, and Teachers in the District of Columbia

OSSE OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

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All staff, including principals, instructional leaders, teachers, and other school personnel, are responsible for ensuring that students learning English are supported in school. Local education agencies (LEAs) have an obligation to ensure English learners (ELs) both develop English language proficiency and meet the same challenging state academic standards as their native English-speaking peers. In their daily work with ELs, teachers are at the forefront of direct services and instruction for students who are limited and non-English proficient. Additionally, by developing effective program models and ensuring adherence to required federal activities, school leaders play a critical role in guaranteeing that ELs have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential.

Who are English Learners?

In D.C., English learners are classified according to the federal government definition. As described in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, this definition classifies as an English learner any student:

A. who is aged 3 through 21;

B. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;

C. (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant

      OR

  (ii)   (I.) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of outlying areas; and

          (II.) 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

  (iii)   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;

      AND

D. whose difficulties speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual;

  (i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments (PARCC);

  (ii) the ability to achieve successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

  (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

EL Program Elements and Process

There are eight affirmative steps, described in detail in this guidebook, which LEAs and schools must take to ensure ELs are provided equal access to educational opportunities. Summarized below, these eight steps are required activities outlined by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to ensure ELs can participate meaningfully and equally in all educational programs.

1 STEP 1: **Educational Approach**
The LEA or school must select a sound educational approach for providing English language services and meaningful program participation for its ELs.

2 STEP 2: **Identification**
The LEA or school must establish a process for identifying all students potentially eligible for English language development services.

3 STEP 3: **Assessment**
Identification should happen within 30 days of enrollment if the student is enrolled at the beginning of the year, and within 2-weeks if enrolled during the school year.

4 STEP 4: **Placement and Services**
The LEA or school must provide students who are identified as ELs with a program of services consistent with its chosen educational approach.

5 STEP 5: **Staffing and Resources**
The LEA or school must provide the necessary resources and qualified staff to implement its educational approach. The LEA or school also must provide staff training periodically.

6 STEP 6: **Exiting and Reclassification**
The LEA or school must use criteria set by OSSE to determine if a student has reached English language proficiency and, if so, exit him or her from the EL program.

7 STEP 7: **Monitoring**
The LEA or school must monitor progress of former ELs for two years after they exit the program.

8 STEP 8: **Program Evaluation**
The LEA or school must evaluate the success of its educational approach periodically and, as necessary, make modifications.

STEP 1: **Educational Approach**

Each LEA should first select one of several different educational approaches. In D.C., five language assistance programs are commonly used.Each of these five program models are considered effective by experts in the field. These programs have been designed to meet the varying needs and grade levels of students across English proficiency levels and include:

→ **Two-Way/Dual-Language Bilingual Program:** In this program model, all students develop literacy skills in their native language while simultaneously learning a second language. Students are expected to master content and language in both languages. Research shows that building upon the home language makes students more successful in English.

→ **Inclusion/Collaborative Teaching:** In this model, the bilingual/EL teacher and the general education teacher collaboratively plan instruction based on students' strengths and needs. Instruction predominately takes place in the general education classroom, with both professionals present, and participating. On some occasions, students may be taken to a different classroom for instruction (also called "pullout"). This is a decision made by both professionals during their collaborative planning.

→ **Content-Based EL:** In the Content-Based EL program for teaching English to speakers of other languages, the academic content areas (i.e., English/ language arts, math, science, and social studies) are used as vehicles for language learning. The emphasis in these classes is on helping ELs develop the cognitive-academic skills needed to succeed in sheltered English and mainstream content-area instruction. The system's content and performance standards serve as the curriculum foundation for the EL content study. Native language support is provided when necessary, and, when possible, to facilitate the acquisition of both English language skills and content knowledge. Students are sometimes pulled-out for targeted supports and interventions.

→ **Newcomer Oral Language and Literacy Program:** This program model is designed for students with limited formal school experiences and promotes the development of language skills necessary to function in the new culture of the U.S. school and society. The emphasis is primarily on developing communicative competence. Students develop literacy in the native language as they develop literacy in English.

→ **Sheltered Content Program:** In this instructional model, students are presented with skills and concepts that are equivalent to those taught in mainstream content courses. Instruction is adapted to ensure comprehension and to allow students to respond to and report on the material studied.

Whatever the chosen approach, it is essential that school leadership and staff are prepared to implement the selected model once students are identified, and are capable of adjusting services based on individual student needs and levels.

STEP 2: **Identification**

Once an educational approach has been selected, the next affirmative step LEAs must take to provide adequate services to ELs is to identify all students who are potentially eligible for such services. To identify potential ELs, the LEA or school must have structured procedures in place. OSSE recommends using the Home Language Survey (HLS), a questionnaire commonly administered to parents of all students at the time of enrollment. The OSSE HLS can be found on the OSSE Website.

The HLS includes three essential questions:

➡ **Is a language other than English spoken in your home?**

➡ **Does your child communicate in a language other than English?**

➡ **What is your relationship to the child?**

If the HLS indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home to or by the student, the student MUST be screened for possible identification as an English learner using the appropriate screener (see table 1 below). Identification should happen within 30 days of enrollment if the student is enrolled at the beginning of the year, and within two weeks if enrolled during the school year. It should be noted that a student should only be administered a screener one time, unless the student is exceptional in oral language proficiency, but has not demonstrated proficiency in all four language domains.

Having another language spoken in the home or routinely used in other settings is not an automatic identification of a student as an EL. LEAs will need to examine the student's academic and assessment history in the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data system (SLED). If SLED indicates that the student has Limited English Proficient (LEP) status or has previously taken the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Assessment, then LEAs should take this information into account when deciding the appropriate program placement and level of service needed for the student.

Based on English language proficiency screener results, students who do not receive the minimum scores for proficiency may be eligible for EL services. These results indicate the student's proficiency in each language domain assessed and should guide the appropriate program placement and level of service needed.

The table below lists OSSE-approved screeners. In order to administer screeners appropriately, test administrator training should be completed for the selected screener(s).
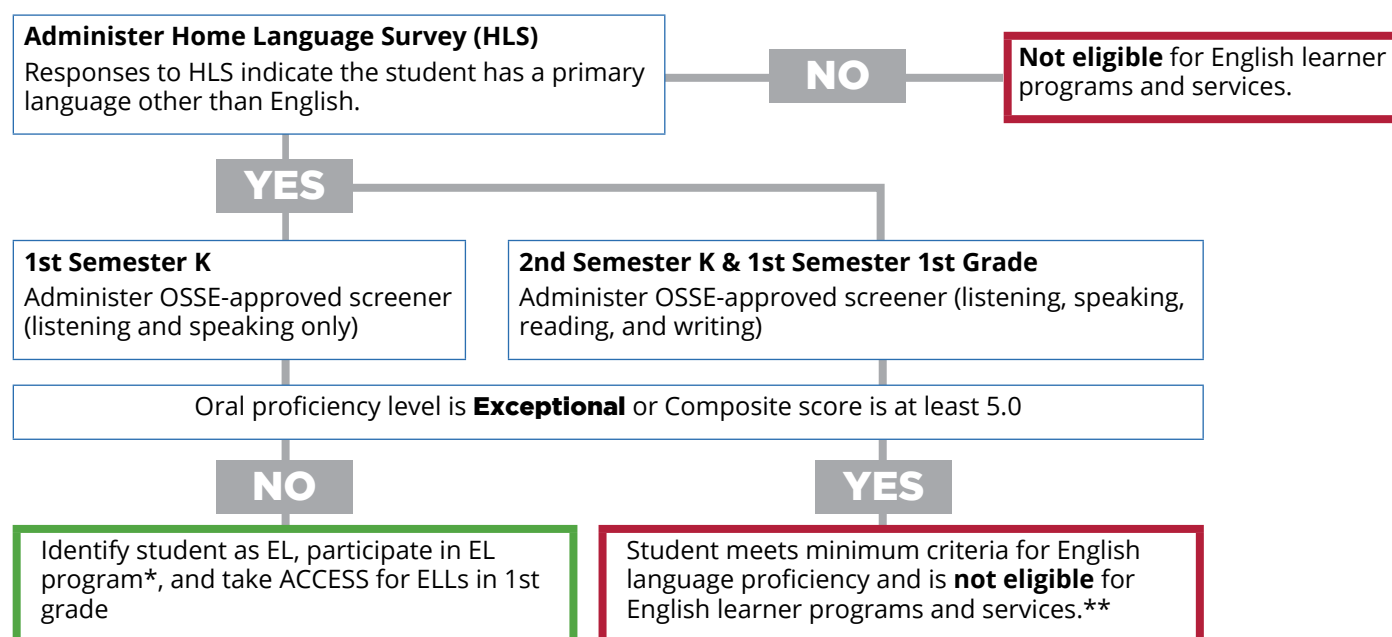
STEP 2: Identification

The table below lists OSSE-approved screeners. In order to administer screeners appropriately, test administrator training should be completed for the selected screener(s).

Table 1: OSSE Approved Screeners

ELP Screener	Grade Levels	Considered Proficient (does not qualify)
Preschool IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test (Pre-IPT)	PK3-PK4 (ages 3-5)	FES: Fluent English Speaker*
Kindergarten WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (K W-APT)	K, 1st semester (listening and speaking only)	Combined listening and speaking score of 29 or higher*
	K, 2nd semester (all four domains)	Combined listening and speaking score of 29 or higher, AND reading score of 11 or higher, AND writing score of 12 or higher
WIDA Measure of Developing English Language (MODEL)	K-12	Composite Score of 5.0
WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)	1-12	Composite Score of 5.0
WIDA Screener	1-12	Composite Score of 5.0

*Note: An FES and/or combined listening and speaking score of 29 or higher indicate oral English language proficiency, but does not include reading and writing. In kindergarten and/or first grade, students should be re-screened.

EL Identification Flowchart | K & 1st grade students

Administer Home Language Survey (HLS)
Responses to HLS indicate the student has a primary language other than English. → **NO** → **Not eligible** for English learner programs and services.

YES

1st Semester K
Administer OSSE-approved screener (listening and speaking only)

2nd Semester K & 1st Semester 1st Grade
Administer OSSE-approved screener (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)

Oral proficiency level is **Exceptional** or Composite score is at least 5.0

NO → Identify student as EL, participate in EL program*, and take ACCESS for ELLs in 1st grade

YES → Student meets minimum criteria for English language proficiency and is **not eligible** for English learner programs and services.**
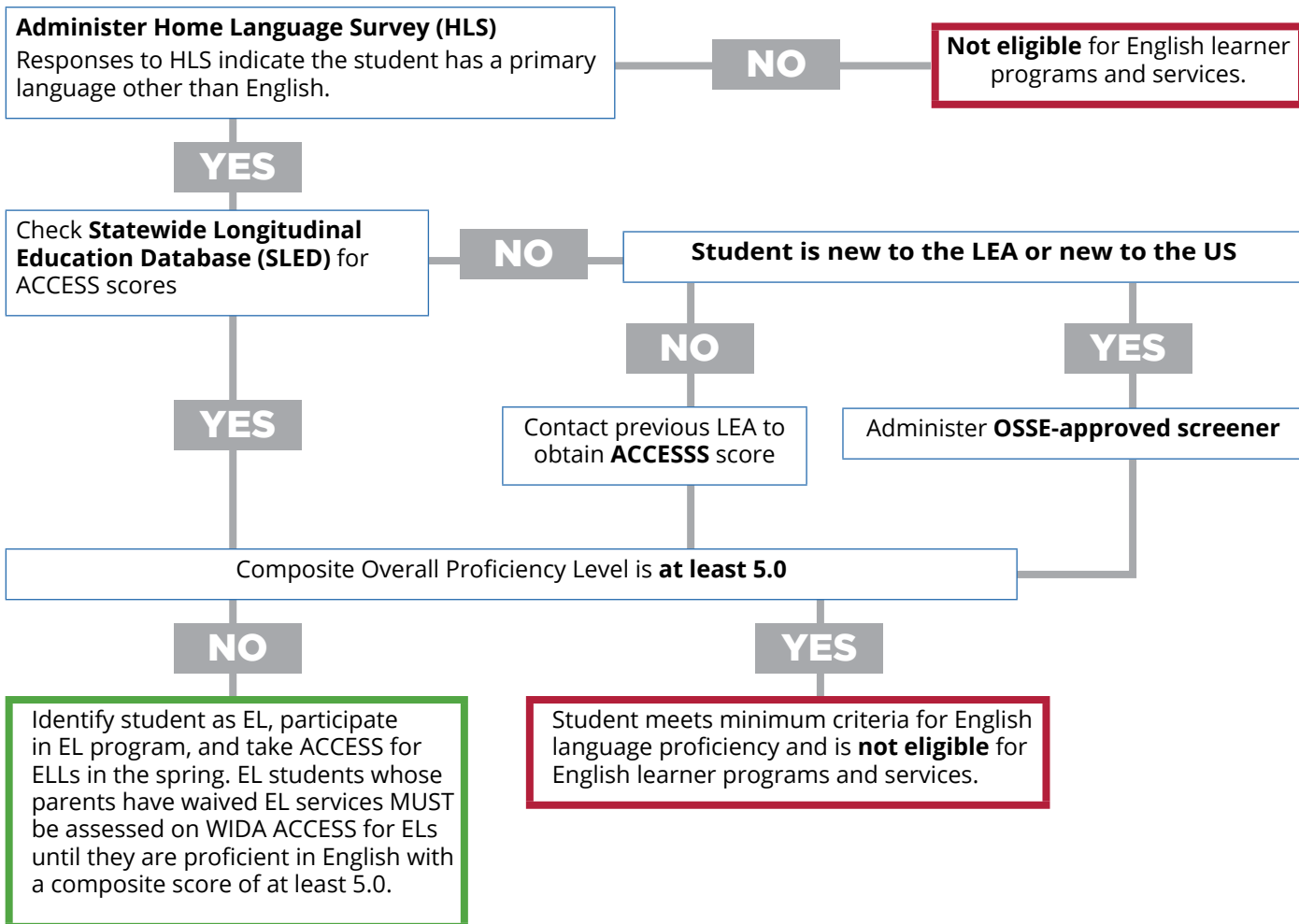
*EL students whose parents have waived EL services MUST be assessed on WIDA ACCESS for ELs until they are proficient in English with a composite score of at least 5.0.

**For 1st semester Kindergarten students, the exceptional proficiency level only includes oral English language proficiency, but does not include reading and writing. In first grade, students should be re-screened.

STEP 2: Identification

EL Identification Flowchart | Grades 1st-12th

Administer Home Language Survey (HLS)
Responses to HLS indicate the student has a primary language other than English.

NO → **Not eligible** for English learner programs and services.

YES

Check **Statewide Longitudinal Education Database (SLED)** for ACCESS scores

NO → **Student is new to the LEA or new to the US**

YES

NO → Contact previous LEA to obtain **ACCESSS** score

YES → Administer **OSSE-approved screener**

Composite Overall Proficiency Level is **at least 5.0**

NO → Identify student as EL, participate in EL program, and take ACCESS for ELLs in the spring. EL students whose parents have waived EL services MUST be assessed on WIDA ACCESS for ELs until they are proficient in English with a composite score of at least 5.0.

YES → Student meets minimum criteria for English language proficiency and is **not eligible** for English learner programs and services.

STEP 3: **Assessment**

Under federal law, all LEAs are required to assess the English proficiency of ELs annually.

In addition to an assessment for identification and program placement, all identified K-12 EL students must be assessed annually for English language proficiency in the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ACCESS for ELLs is the annual English language proficiency assessment given to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as an English learner.

Required Training for Test Administrators

Test administrators must receive a passing score of 80% on all applicable quizzes if they administer ACCESS for ELLs. Once the training has been completed, only the speaking portion of the training and its corresponding quiz must be retaken every year. Training certificates on the WIDA website portal will be updated as a record of completion. Training must be completed by the start of the testing window and training is available online through the WIDA website: https://www.wida.us/. The WIDA website trainings are password protected. Test administrators will need to contact their LEA EL Assessment Point of Contact to obtain login credentials or call the WIDA Client Services Center: 1-866-276-7735.

Test Administration

ACCESS for ELLs is primarily administered online, with the exception of the writing domain in select grades and for paper-based accommodations. To fully prepare for test administration, LEAs must complete the roster verification process, submit the Pre-ID file for Pre-ID labels and order materials through the WIDA Assessment Management System (AMS), and complete all required training activities prior to test administration. Pre-ID labels eliminate the need for Test Administrators to manually bubble in student demographic information on the covers of the test booklet. To access the WIDA Assessment Management System (AMS) to order materials or administer the ACCESS for ELLs assessment online, please contact your LEA EL Assessment Point of Contact.

STEP 3: Assessment

Scoring and Reporting

Once all scoring has been completed, score reports will be available to download in the WIDA AMS and score reports will be mailed to the LEA central office. The parent/guardian report should be sent home to parents/guardians and can be discussed with the student for goal-setting and progress checks. WIDA provides translations of the Parent Report and a sample parent cover letter in the WIDA Download Library on the WIDA website. Additionally, scores will be available in SLED.

Accommodations and Other Supports for EL Students with and without Disabilities

EL students with disabilities are entitled to receive accommodations on statewide tests, including ACCESS for ELLs, with few exceptions. Accommodations, accessibility tools, and test administration features are described in detail on the WIDA website. The student's IEP team (or adults familiar with the student, in the case of a 504 plan) must determine how the student will participate in ACCESS for ELLs testing and document this information in the student's IEP or 504 plan. The student's IEP or 504 plan must specify precisely which test accommodation(s) he or she will receive, or if the student will participate in the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an assessment of English language proficiency for students in grades 1 -12 who are classified as English learners and have significant cognitive disabilities that prevent their meaningful participation in the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Only EL students with significant disabilities should be considered for the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs, particularly if they participate in the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA), or are in grades K–2, 9, 10, or 12, and would likely take the MSAA in a tested grade. Students taking the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs must meet the eligibility criteria outlined by OSSE. For more information, visit: http://osse.dc.gov/service/access-ellsaccess-20

Students who are assessed and determined to not have full English language proficiency are considered to be ELs. By law, these students are entitled to language support services or bilingual language services. Students should be placed in a language assistance program or bilingual education program based on data collected during the identification and assessment process (Steps 2–3).

Parent Notification

LEAs must have a formal procedure in place to ensure parents have been informed of their child's English language proficiency assessment data, the EL services provided by the district, and the expected results of participation in programs and services.

Within 30 days of the start of the school year, or within 30 days of placement if not identified at the beginning of school, the LEA must notify the parent(s) of ELs identified as needing services. This must be done in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parent(s) can understand.

STEP 4: Placement and Services

The parent notification should include:

→ **The reasons for their child's identification as an EL and for placement in language instruction educational programs;**

→ **The child's level of English proficiency and how it is assessed, and the status of the child's academic achievement;**

→ **The method of instruction used in the child's program;**

→ **How such programs will help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation;**

→ **Specific exit requirements for such programs, expected rate of transition, and expected rate of graduation, if Title III funds are used for children in secondary school;**

→ **How such programs align with the language goals of the child's IEP (in the case of a child with a disability); and**

→ **The rights of parent(s):**
  - **To remove their child from such programs upon their request;**
  - **To decline to enroll in the program or choose another program, if available; and**
  - **To be assisted in selecting from among various programs and methods of instruction, if more than one program or method is offered.**

Opt-Out

In accordance with federal law, parents have the right to opt-out of EL programs and services. Opting out of EL services occurs only after eligibility has been determined.

Students whose parents decline all EL services provided by the LEA are considered to have opted-out. The parent(s) decision to opt-out does not change the status of the student. If services are refused, LEAs should work directly with the parents to ensure they understand the purpose of the service. If the parent(s) understands the service, yet still prefers to opt-out, then the refusal of services must be documented in writing.

An English learner who is 'opted out' and declined all EL programs and services must be monitored regularly to ensure academic progress, be provided adequate support to reduce any language barriers, and participate in the annual ACCESS for ELLs assessment until meeting the exit protocol requirements. After meeting the exit protocol requirements, the student who has 'opted out' is formally exited and is monitored for two years.

Regardless of their participation in EL programs and services, once students are identified as English learners they must have their English language proficiency assessed with ACCESS for ELLs.

Program Models

Consistent with its educational approach, LEAs must provide an instructional language assistance or bilingual program to students who are identified as ELs. The chosen program model must be recognized as effective and sound by experts, and services should meet individual student needs. Additionally, the LEA or school must determine who will provide services, when services will be rendered, and how often services will be provided. In all program models, the LEA must ensure that ELs are held to the same high standards as all students.

Accommodations

Any student identified as an EL, including those students whose parents have opted-out of English language instructional programs and services, is eligible for accommodations on any statewide assessment. Additionally, advanced English learner students who have been exited from English language instructional program services in the past two years based on English language proficiency levels (ELP) or higher, in "EL Monitoring" status, are eligible for certain accommodations (as needed), detailed in the most recent Testing Accommodations Manual, available here: http://osse.dc.gov/service/testing-accommodations

Supporting Students with Disabilities

LEAs must also provide appropriate special education services to ELs with disabilities who are found to be eligible. When developing an IEP for a student who is dual-identified, in addition to required personnel, LEAs should also include a person who has specialized knowledge of language acquisition on the student's IEP team to ensure appropriate services.

STEP 5: **Staffing and Resources**

To provide ELs the appropriate English language acquisition program, LEAs have a responsibility to ensure that needed resources exist and school staff have the skills and capacity to implement the program. Resources may include instructional staffing (e.g., teaching assistants), instructional equipment, and materials. Additionally, the LEA must ensure instructional staff has the educational expertise and qualifications to implement services. This may include efforts to recruit and hire staff with relevant experience working with English learners, as well as efforts to identify and provide needed professional development.

Examples of professional development activities designed to meet the needs of educators who serve ELs include: induction programs for new teachers, faculty development for content teachers and administrators, career ladder programs for paraprofessionals, and certification-oriented coursework for English language development specialists.

STEP 6: **Exiting and Reclassification**

Once a student reaches a level of English proficiency that no longer prevents him or her from fully accessing the curriculum, the student may be exited from EL programs and services.

In general, English learners are no longer classified as having EL/LEP status once they have attained the language skills necessary to learn in age and grade appropriate settings in all areas of language development without the use of adapted or modified English materials. Exit is a term that is used when a student has been formally "exited" from the EL program and is no longer in need of language support services.

The decision to reclassify and exit students from EL services should be based on multiple, developmentally appropriate measures, including but not limited to ACCESS for ELLs and PARCC scores in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics. Currently, an overall composite score of at least 5.0 on the ACCESS for ELLs indicates English language proficiency and is used to signal a student's reclassification. A student remains identified as having EL/LEP status until exit protocol requirements are satisfied.

After the administration of the annual ACCESS for ELLs, LEAs review the ACCESS Score Report results to determine student placement in EL services, to exit students who have met the protocol requirements, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the EL program and services. All English learners must receive scores in all four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) on the spring ACCESS for ELLs test administration in order to be considered for exit from EL services. Students are not exited if they **do not** meet all of the exit protocol requirements.

Exit Protocol Requirements

➡ **The student receives at least a 5.0 overall composite score on the ACCESS for ELLs assessment.**

➡ **Parents must be notified in writing of the exit decision, the student's English language proficiency, supporting evidence, and the right to contest the reclassification. Parental notification must be retained on file.**

Exit Protocol Recommendations

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. For more information about OSSE's transition plan to ESSA, which goes into effect school year 2017-2018, please visit: http://osse.dc.gov/essa. The following exit protocol actions are recommended as OSSE develops its State Plan for the ESSA:

➡ **Develop a review process that involves general education educators, bilingual/EL educators, school specialists, and the student's family in collaborative decision-making.**

➡ **Compile a body of evidence to confirm the student's proficiency in English and grade-level reading, writing, and other content area proficiency.**

Body of Evidence

LEAs must develop a standardized process and criteria for further investigation and confirmation of the student's ability to meet grade-level performance expectations. A body of evidence should represent data that is used to define academic growth and grade level proficiency as well as the student's linguistic growth and English language proficiency.

A uniform reclassification procedure must be used with all EL students in an LEA. Reclassification must also include monitoring provisions and a procedure for the student to re-enter the EL program if evidence indicates that language proficiency is in question. These procedures should be developed at the LEA level, provided to all educators and parents, and made available during Enrollment Audits and monitoring visits.

If an exited EL is not progressing academically as expected and monitoring suggests a persistent language need, LEAs should re-test the student's English language proficiency with a valid, reliable, and grade-appropriate English language proficiency test to see if the student must be offered additional language assistance services. In no case should re-testing of an exited student's English language proficiency, with ACCESS for ELLs, be prohibited. If the student is reentered into EL services, however, the LEA should document the reasons why and obtain the parent's consent to reclassify as an English learner.

Students exiting from EL status must be monitored for two years to ensure that:

➡ **they have not been prematurely exited;**

➡ **any academic deficits incurred as a result of participating in the EL program have been remedied; and**

➡ **they are meaningfully participating in the standard program of instruction comparable to their non-EL peers.**

Additional guidance on using a body of evidence to reclassify ELs can be found here.

STEP 7: **Monitoring**

7

The purpose of monitoring the EL student's English language and academic development is to:

→ **assess the student's ongoing progress and achievement in English language proficiency and content areas in order to plan and modify instruction accordingly;**

→ **promote the student to different instructional levels within the EL program on the basis of growth in English language skills (reassignment); and**

→ **periodically reclassify the student's English language proficiency level (reclassification).**

Monitoring Tips

The following scenarios demonstrate the need to monitor and perhaps provide additional language support to exited former ELs:

• **A high school student exits at the end of the school year. During the first two terms of the succeeding year, the student's report cards show extremely poor grades.**

• **A student exited from bilingual/EL services begins to do poorly in school. Staff mistakenly attributes her low performance to a disability since they see her as English proficient.**

• **Truancy becomes a problem for a student who had good attendance prior to exiting bilingual/EL services.**

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a proven approach associated with positive outcomes for all students who are struggling, including English learners. For more information on RtI and how to effectively implement this approach for ELs, visit here.

LEAs should have a process in place for monitoring. Students being monitored should have a document stating how often they will be monitored and what information will be reviewed to measure success. If a student is not successful, the LEA should determine whether the cause is a lack of language proficiency, poor academics, or other factors, and have procedures in place to assist these students.

Providing effective educational services for EL students require a series of processes for monitoring and guiding student progress, including:

→ **Ongoing monitoring of development of language and content skills/knowledge as the student progresses through his/her program of instruction**

→ **Determining when the student has acquired the academic language proficiency necessary to be placed full-time at the appropriate grade level in the regular instructional program without EL services (i.e., exit protocol requirements);**

→ **Post-service monitoring to ensure successful transition into the regular instructional program; and**

→ **Periodic program evaluation to ensure that language and academic support services for EL students are effective.**

STEP 8: **Program Evaluation**

All LEAs must periodically evaluate the success of their EL programs and make modifications as necessary. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how the program functions relative to its stated goals. Some LEAs perform internal program evaluations — analyses conducted by staff within the program, school, or district — while others will bring in an external evaluator. Whatever the approach, it is important that the LEA performs a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of their chosen program model(s) and its outcomes.

Through Title III, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), supplemental resources are provided to LEAs to support English language acquisition and academic achievement of English learners and immigrant youth. Grant recipients are required to carry out an evaluation and provide to the SEA, at the conclusion of every second fiscal year, the results via a report. The report must contain a description of the activities conducted and students served, and should include:

1. **A description of the programs and activities conducted by the LEA with funds received during the two immediately preceding fiscal years, which should include a description of how programs and activities supplemented programs funded primarily with State or local funds;**

2. **The number and percentage of ELs in the program who are making progress toward achieving English language proficiency in the aggregate and disaggregated, at a minimum, by ELs with a disability;**

3. **The number and percentage of ELs in the program attaining English language proficiency based on ELP standards, as determined by the ELP assessment;**

4. **The number and percentage of ELs who exit the language instruction educational programs based on their attainment of English language proficiency;**

5. **The number and percentage of ELs meeting challenging State academic standards for each of the 4 years after they are no longer receiving services in the aggregate and disaggregated, at a minimum, by English learners with a disability;**

6. **The number and percentage of ELs who have not attained English language proficiency within 5 years of initial classification as an English learner and first enrollment in the LEA.**

Additionally, OSSE will conduct on-site and/or desktop reviews of Title III, Part A programs every second fiscal year.

For all LEAs, The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) has developed toolkit resources to aid schools and districts in performing thorough, comprehensive program evaluations. For more information on how to effectively evaluate programs and services for English learners, see the Department of Education evaluation toolkit resource here.

Best Practices in Language Assistance Programs and Interventions

Involving Parents in the Process

Educating and involving parents in the school community and placement process can increase student achievement in becoming English language-proficient and make the transition easier for students who are identified as ELs.

Pursuant to the DC Language Access Act, state and local education agencies must provide adequate language assistance services to parents and families, if applicable, which include translation and interpretation services. Schools must translate all vital documents in the languages spoken within the school community, and must provide translation services during meetings, if necessary.

TIP: The DC Language Access Program, through the Office of Human Rights, provides guidance and access to translation services through LanguageLine Solutions – an on-demand service that provides telephonic interpretation solutions. The Language Line is easy to use and has interpreters available in all languages. Find DC Language Access Program resources and instructions on how to access the Language Line here.

Getting to know more about students' families, communities and home life can also help schools integrate ELs into the classroom. This can include:

→ **Identifying expectations and aspirations:** Discovering what is expected by ELs, their families and their communities, and learning what they expect from themselves, through face-to-face conversation, can be very helpful in finding ways to support them. Having this information can help teachers avoid making generalizations and assumptions about individual students and their families. It is also good to hear directly from families and students about their aspirations.

→ **Understanding the families' culture:** Teachers should spend time understanding the culture and traditions of EL and immigrant students and their families. When schools value an EL's native language and culture, it shows respect and promotes diversity and multicultural principles. When schools support students' bicultural and multicultural identity and development, families will more likely feel that they are educational partners within their child's school community.

For more information on how to ensure meaningful communication with LEP parents and guardians, and to access additional resources, see the Department of Education's parent toolkit resource here.

Although English learners come from many different backgrounds and have reached varying levels of education, there are some common characteristics regarding basic principles of second language acquisition that can assist all teachers in addressing their needs.

Best Practices in EL Programs and Interventions

Table 2: Stages and Strategies			
Stage	**Characteristics**	**Timeframe**	**Teacher Prompts and Strategies**
Silent/Receptive	Non-verbal, developing listening skills, may respond nonverbally to commands and questions.	0–6 months	Show me… Circle the… Where is…? Who has…?
Early Speech	Uses single words or simple sentences (usually present tense), developing listening skills.	6 months–1 year	Yes/no questions Either/or questions One- or two-word answers Lists Labels
Speech Emergence	Uses language socially, responds with simple sentences, uses some academic language.	1–3 years	· Why…? · How…? Explain… Phrase or short-sentence answers
Intermediate	Understands and uses more complex sentences, speech contains few errors, understands more academic language.	3–5 years	What would happen if…? Why do you think…?
Advanced	Uses more fluent speech with limited errors, understands most academic language and abstract concepts.	5–7 years	Decide if… Retell…

General Education Classroom Strategies

In addition to implementing appropriate EL or bilingual programs, the following strategies are recommended for including ELs in general education programs:

➡ **General Education Differentiation:** General education teachers of ELs should adapt lessons, assignments, and instructional groups to reduce language barriers and to assist ELs in participating fully in the educational program.

➡ **Multicultural Environment:** Classrooms should foster a multicultural environment in which students feel like welcome members of the learning community.

Teaching Strategies for English Learners

There are a number of strategies that teachers can use to help students become more proficient in English. These strategies include:

1. **Increased wait time.** All students need sufficient wait time to formulate an answer to a teacher's question. ELs may need some extra time to process the answer and produce the vocabulary and phrasing to express their thoughts in English.

2. **Model correct English.** Especially in the early stages of language learning, it is important not to over-correct grammar. Students may get frustrated and be hesitant to speak if they are constantly corrected. Instead, model the use of the correct English structure during lessons and informal conversations to the student.

3. **Simplify your language and use visuals.** During lessons and informal conversations, teachers should use a variety of techniques to ensure understanding. These include simplifying language, rephrasing, repeating key words/phrases, questioning for comprehension, using body language/gestures, and using visuals (e.g. pictures, drawings, maps, graphic organizers, etc.). Students need comprehensible input to build their own comprehension and speaking skills.

4. **Incorporate a variety of learning styles.** All students learn differently. Present material through a variety of learning styles (i.e., oral, visual, tactile, kinesthetic).

5. **Pair students and use cooperative learning.** For ELs at all levels, as well as for other students, pairing or grouping can be effective methods for promoting language acquisition. Consider a variety of pairing and cooperative learning activities. Some examples include (a) pairing students who share the same home language, (b) pairing students who do not share the same home language, (c) using heterogeneous groups to complete a project, and (d) using centers for small group activities.

6. **Diversify learning activities according to the stages of language development.** Students need multiple opportunities to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The teacher must relate the stage of language development to an appropriate activity depending upon the level of language the activity necessitates. For example, writing captions from illustrations for a book report is appropriate for a low to intermediate level student, however, a more advanced student should be able to write a book report from an outline that has been developed with a peer or a teacher.

7. **Use prior knowledge.** As is the case with all students, using an EL's prior knowledge and experiences is important for inclusion and engagement in the lesson. Students may have knowledge of a subject in their home language and only lack the English vocabulary to share this knowledge. Students may have had experiences related to the story or lesson, so providing students with a variety of opportunities (e.g., drawing, pointing, providing picture cards) to make connections to their lives is a valuable instructional strategy.

Best Practices in EL Programs and Interventions

8. **Incorporate the students' languages and cultures.** Using the students' home languages will give them a sense of pride. Teachers may incorporate the home languages in a variety of ways. Consider the "word of the week" in a different language. This word could be incorporated in various activities. Other examples of incorporating different languages include the morning greeting in different languages, parent visitors who teach a topic in the home language, outside visitors who might teach songs, poems, students who teach a song or rhyme in the home language, etc. Students' home cultures can be incorporated through literature, poems, pictures, movies, and field trips. In our multicultural world, all students benefit from learning about different cultures. In a similar vein, restricting the use of the home language during instruction may isolate an EL, particularly if they are newcomers with little to no English skills or are trying to get academic assistance from someone who speaks the same language.

9. **Intensive reading support.** If formative assessment data suggests that the English learner may be at risk for reading problems in English, school leaders and teachers should attempt to provide him or her with opportunities to receive additional direct instruction in intensive, structured sessions with small groups of students who have similar skill levels. The types of interventions provided and the amount of time in pullout instruction should be linked to the identified gaps in student knowledge. Especially with emerging readers, interventions should address the five core reading elements: (a) phonological awareness, (b) phonics, (c) reading fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension.

10. **Be alert to mental fatigue.** Language learners can succumb to mental fatigue when they are acquiring a new language, even when they have advanced communication skills. This fatigue may manifest as disengagement from the academic activity. Allow an EL, who is exhibiting mental fatigue, an opportunity to refresh periodically by creating or allowing for brief breaks from instruction that require reduced English communication demands, such as a puzzle, browsing a text with pictures, or watching a video.

11. **Be aware of your communication with the student.** Refrain from speaking at an excessively slow speed or loudly. These communication styles may not only offend a student, but also distort words, potentially making the speech unintelligible to a language learner.

Interim Assessment of Student Progress

By selecting and designating assessments (i.e., rubrics, rating scales, observation checklists, norm- referenced assessments) that can authentically assess the progress of ELs and their response to instruction and interventions, school teams can continually inform and support instruction and intervention.

Assessing student progress can help make teaching more responsive by providing feedback to students, parents, teachers, and administrators in a timely manner and helping team members determine the success of the interventions. Assessments will indicate whether current interventions are sufficient for improving student performance or if a different approach and supports are needed.

Steps for Assessing Student Progress:

➡ **Determine expectations for student progress.**

➡ **Determine if students are benefiting from the instructional program.**

➡ **Identify students not demonstrating adequate progress. Consider student data disaggregated by language, gender, race, and ethnicity.**

➡ **Build culturally responsive instruction/interventions for students in need.**

➡ **Compare efficacy of different forms of instruction/intervention and program design.**

WIDA English Language Pro iciency Standards

The WIDA English Language Development Framework, OSSE's language development standards for ELs in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12, encompasses:

→ **Social and instructional language**

→ **The language of Language Arts**

→ **The language of Mathematics**

→ **The language of Science**

→ **The language of Social Studies**

The WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards are designed as a curriculum and instruction planning tool. The standards help educators determine student's English language proficiency levels and how to appropriately challenge students to reach higher levels.

1. **The Language Domains**
   Each of the five ELP Standards encompasses four language domains that define how ELs process and use them:

   LISTENING
   Process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations.

   SPEAKING
   Engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

   READING
   Process, understand, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols, and text with understanding and fluency.

   WRITING
   Engage in written communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

2. **Grade-Level Clusters**
   Each standard is organized by grade-level cluster:
   - **Pre-K–K**
   - **Grades1–2**
   - **Grades 3–5**
   - **Grades 6–8 and**
   - **Grades 9–12.**

3. **The Language Proficiency Levels**

By mapping the stages of English language development onto a continuum of second language acquisition, we begin to define the six levels of English language proficiency:

Performance Level	Description
6: REACHING	Specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level. A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specific grade level. Oral and written communications in English comparable to English-proficient peers.
5: BRIDGING	Specialized or technical language of the content areas. A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written disclosure, including stories, essays or reports. Oral and written language nearly comparable to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level materials.
4: EXPANDING	Specific and some technical language of the content areas. A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences or paragraphs. Oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communications when presented with oral or written discourse connected with sensory, graphic or interactive support.
3: DEVELOPING	General and some specific language of the content areas. Expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs. Oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written narrative or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support.
2: BEGINNING	General language related to the content areas. Phrases or short sentences. Oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one-to- multiple step commands, directions, questions or a series of statements with sensory, graphic or interactive support.
1: ENTERING	Pictorial graphic representation of the language of the content areas. Words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice of yes/no, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support.

Resources Available to Teachers and Instructional Leaders

Suggested Web Sites

Department of Education English Learner Toolkit
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights Programs for English Language Learners
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/index.html

Colorin' Colorado
http://www.colorincolorado.org/sites/default/files/Policy_Guide_Final.pdf

Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol
http://siop.pearson.com/about-siop/index.html

everythingESL.net
www.everythingESL.net

National Association for Bilingual Education
www.nabe.org

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
http://www.tesol.org/

Washington Area Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
http://watesol.wildapricot.org/

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Assessments, Standards, and Response to Intervention (RtI2)
www.wida.us

Language Access
http://ohr.dc.gov/service/language-access-program-information-portal

Suggested WIDA Information

WIDA's ELP Standards, 2007 Edition: The ELP standards are available as two separate documents to reduce the size of the download. If you have any difficulty opening these documents, please make sure that your computer has the latest version of Adobe Reader installed, available for free at www.adobe.com.

Grade level clusters Pre-K-5
http://www.wida.us/standards/PreK- 5%20Standards%20web.pdf

Grade level clusters 6-12
http://www.wida.us/standards/6- 12%20Standards%20web.pdf

Who should I contact if I need more information on English Learner programs at OSSE?

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For more information on all other program services, visit osse.dc.gov.

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