Jan. 27, 2022

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has monitored the performance of English learners (ELs) on the statewide ACCESS for ELLs assessment, which measures English language proficiency, and engaged with key stakeholders around how best to determine when students no longer need EL services to succeed in the general classroom. **The EL exit criteria will change from a proficiency level of 5.0 on ACCESS to a proficiency level of 4.5 for students in grades 1-12, beginning with the 2021-22 ACCESS assessment (to affect EL statuses beginning in the 2022-23 school year).** The exit criteria for students in kindergarten remains the same at 5.0, as the kindergarten assessment did not significantly change. This policy change will not be retroactive.

**OSSE maintains high expectations of students**: WIDA reset its standards and scoring mechanisms on the 2016-17 ACCESS assessment so that the ACCESS score of 5.0 now aligns with a 5.9-6.0 on the previous version, and a score of 4.5 on ACCESS aligns with a 5.1-5.4 on the previous version. During this time, the percent of students who were exiting EL status declined from approximately 20 percent annually to approximately 5 percent. Under the updated criteria, approximately 12 percent of students are likely to exit annually, which is still below the prior average.

**Student Benefit:** OSSE research has shown that students who score a 4.5-4.9 on ACCESS score similarly on the PARCC English Language Arts assessment as students who are not English learners, which shows that these students no longer require additional services to be successful in the general classroom. Academic research has shown negative impacts on students who are in EL status for longer than is necessary.

As in the past, if a student who has exited EL status demonstrates a need for additional EL-related services, the LEA may still re-enter them into EL status. For more information on that process, please consult the [Delivering Education Services to English Learners: Policies and Procedures for Administrators, Instructional Leaders, and Teachers in the District of Columbia](file:///%5C%5Cossedaarprd03.dcgov.priv%5CEDM%24%5CEnglish%20Learners%5CDocumentation%5CDelivering%20Education%20Services%20to%20English%20Learners%3A%20Policies%20and%20Procedures%20for%20Administrators%2C%20Instructional%20Leaders%2C%20and%20Teachers%20in%20the%20District%20of%20Columbia).

**Funding**: This criterion change will likely result in more students exiting EL status over time, meaning that LEAs will have fewer ELs to serve, thus reducing EL-related UPSFF funds. This policy change coincides with an influx of federal recovery and relief funds, as well as an increase in the UPSFF weight for secondary ELs from 0.5 to 0.75, which may be able to support in this transition. LEAs are likely to see a reduction of less than 10 percent of their EL-related UPSFF funding, based on prior years’ ACCESS scores.

**ACCESS Growth**: The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that state education agencies measure English language proficiency growth. Due to the disruptions in testing in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, resetting all student baselines to the 2021-22 school year simultaneously with the exit criterion change will enable OSSE to more equitably calculate students’ expected growth.

As always, providing students with the right services and supports is OSSE’s top priority. If you have any questions regarding this policy change, please contact Anika Harris at Anika.Harris@dc.gov.