

Title III, Part A, Subpart 1: English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement

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1. Entrance and Exit Procedures (ESEA section 3113(b)(2)): Describe how the SEA will establish and implement, with timely and meaningful consultation with LEAs representing the geographic diversity of the State, standardized, statewide entrance and exit procedures, including an assurance that all students who may be English learners are assessed for such status within 30 days of enrollment in a school in the State.

The English learner population in Minnesota has increased more than 300 percent in the last 20 years. Currently, it is the fastest growing student population in the state. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity for creating additional growth toward proficiency of the Minnesota English learner (EL) as well as creating opportunities to meaningfully include and support English learners.

Previously, the state of Minnesota did not have standardized statewide EL entry and exit criteria or procedures. The proposed shift in ESSA with required statewide criteria and procedures compelled engagement with a wide variety of English learner stakeholders. Local English learner coordinators, teachers and community stakeholders were invited to focus on creating and understanding new statewide procedures and criteria, and perceive and eliminate potential difficulties. In addition, parent and family groups, researchers and administrators were also invited to participate in the EL committee which was formed in fall 2016.

This diverse group of stakeholders, representing the cities, towns and rural areas throughout the state, held a series of five meetings facilitated by the Minnesota Department of Education during the 2016-17 school year. ESSA stakeholders discussed the potential ramification of required ESSA decisions impacting the Minnesota English learners to offer direction and advice to frame essential decisions. Working together, these stakeholders arrived at some recommendations for the state's ESSA plan, the inclusion of new-to-country English learners (ELs) in accountability and the addition of reclassified ELs for four years in the English learner student group. These recommendations for the ESSA state plan were presented to the commissioner of education, and were adopted into the accountability system. Additional information is located on the [Minnesota Department of Education's website](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ESSA/meet/eng/) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ESSA/meet/eng/>).

Minnesota's English language development standards and assessment framework centers around the development of academic language. Minnesota is a part of the WIDA consortium and therefore utilizes the WIDA standards framework and assessments. In school year 2015-16, all states in the WIDA consortium, including Minnesota, administered a new version of ACCESS. With the change in the assessment from ACCESS

1.0 to ACCESS 2.0, the EL committee realized that to set specific exit criteria—including a definition of English language development proficiency—the recommended exit score on ACCESS 1.0 needed to be changed.

Also, under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.59, additional criteria were permitted to be used to re-evaluate an English learner's proficiency. While the statute lists potential measures for appraising proficiency, prior to ESSA, districts were allowed to develop rubrics and employ the criteria with no statewide standardization. The committee grasped that to ensure standardization, specific guidelines and instructions would need to be created and developed. Furthermore, the committee recognized that to establish standardized entry criteria, the recommended Minnesota *Home Language Survey*, developed shortly after No Child Left Behind, needed to be improved and the identification, entrance and exit procedure manual would need to be updated.

Therefore, the EL committee group and additional volunteers were placed into three working groups: EL proficiency definition, additional standardized English learner criteria, and EL procedures. These groups met throughout the spring of 2017 to analyze distinct features of their charge with a focus on creating, generating and recommending statewide standardized, identification, entrance and exit criteria and procedures. For additional information on the work of the stakeholders, please see the [Minnesota Department of Education's website](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ESSA/meet/eng/) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/ESSA/meet/eng/>).

With the new standard setting of the ACCESS 2.0, the proficiency group reviewed processes for developing a new definition of English language proficiency based upon students' ACCESS 2.0 scores. Using a decision consistency matrix as well as other measures, the group analyzed several different proficiency scores and the student's ability to successfully access the challenging academic content. Additionally, two districts with large EL populations were able to review potential English proficiency definitions.

After several meetings, the group recommended two different English proficiency definitions to the commissioner of education. Based upon test score evidence and stakeholder feedback, the commissioner determined that English proficiency on the ACCESS 2.0 would be an overall composite score of 4.5 or higher, with three of the four domains above or equal to 3.5. Feedback from both districts and parents felt that this would allow students with individual differences in one domain to be proficient. This definition is used as part of the standardized exit criteria and is incorporated within the new accountability system.

The additional criteria group reviewed and assessed different potential rubrics allowed under Minnesota law (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.59), including observation, teacher judgement, parental recommendation and additional assessment evaluations. Acknowledging the diversity of school districts throughout the state, as well as the vast dissimilar number of ELs in districts, the facilitators sought additional feedback from staff in districts outside the Twin Cities Metro Area regarding current EL exit decisions. They led two focus groups and conducted a statewide survey in which 52 percent of the respondents were from outside the seven-county Twin Cities metro area.

The survey and feedback indicated that currently districts use a variety of criteria besides ACCESS scores in exit decisions: statewide assessments, district assessments, teacher and district judgement, and students' grades. Teachers felt that measures such as teacher observations, parent input and additional assessments could allow for more than one data point to be considered when making the exiting decision, but that these measures were often subjective and didn't always rely on a common understanding of academic language and language

acquisition. Respondents also suggested that student input, student work samples and grades could be considered, although they often have the same shortcomings as other subjective measures. Stakeholders recognized that the criteria be understandable, practical and, most importantly, applied with equity to qualified students. After receiving the feedback, the additional criteria group reconvened and incorporated the feedback to develop additional criteria.

All districts in Minnesota must use the same ACCESS proficiency score and follow the same process for using additional criteria, such as teacher judgment and additional assessments, when determining whether or not to exit a student from EL services. When evaluating whether or not a student should be exited from EL services, districts must consider the following:

- Local educational agencies (LEAs)—districts, charters, intermediate districts, education cooperatives—must automatically exit and reclassify students if their composite score is at least 4.5 and all domain scores are at least 3.5.
- If a student does not have an ACCESS overall composite score of at least 4.5 and at least three out of four domain scores (listening, speaking, reading and writing) of at least 3.5, then that student may not be exited from EL services.
- If a student has met the ACCESS proficiency score of at least a 4.5 overall composite score and at least three out of four domain scores of at least 3.5, then schools and districts may consider exiting and reclassifying a student.
- LEAs must use additional criteria to determine if a student should be retained in EL services if a student has met the proficiency score but one domain score is below 3.5.

If a student has met the proficiency score but one domain score is below 3.5, LEAs must take the following the steps to determine if a student should be retained in EL services. These steps are meant to be considered together; no one step takes precedence over the others.

- Determine if there is evidence that the student is able to meet grade-level core content standards. Examples of evidence could include grades, recent examples of student work, and documented observations by classroom teachers focusing on language use in the classroom.
- Use an additional assessment instrument to test the domain with a score below 3.5 to determine if the student has a need for continued EL services. Examples of additional assessments could include the WIDA Model, the TEAE writing assessment, the MN SOLOM speaking assessment, or formative assessments using the WIDA speaking and writing rubrics. MDE strongly encourages schools and districts to consider any formative language assessments they have used throughout the year.
- If a student has a disability, LEAs must consult with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to determine if dual service is appropriate moving forward.

If an LEA evaluates a student's classroom performance, collects additional assessment data, and—if appropriate—consults with the IEP team, and the evidence collectively suggests that a student would benefit from continued EL services, then that student may be retained in EL services. However, if an LEA decides to retain a student in EL services, then the parents must be consulted and informed about how the decision was made and the data used to retain the student must be documented in the student's cumulative file.

The last group, the EL procedures group, was charged with several different tasks. First, the group was asked to review the current recommended Minnesota *Home Language Survey* to identify potential English learners. Using materials published by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and other researchers, the group

developed and designed the *Minnesota Language Survey* (MNL). With the help and support of parent and student groups who provided feedback at several points in the process, as well as an expert review by the Midwest Comprehensive Center at American Institute of Research (AIR), the language survey was changed to reflect the asset of knowing a second language.

In June 2017, the state of Minnesota began translating the MNL into its largest language groups: Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Karen, Arabic, Vietnamese, Oromo, Russian, Amharic, Chinese, Khmer, Lao, French, Swahili, Nepali, Telugu, Karenni and Hindi. This newly created *Minnesota Language Survey* will replace any previous language surveys made by the state or the district. Upon completion, each translated MNL will be placed on Minnesota's TransACT portal which houses 112 ESSA-compliant parent notification letters and forms for free download by any Minnesota school district. All newly enrolling students in the state of Minnesota from prekindergarten to grade 12 must have a completed *Minnesota Language Survey*. Based upon guidance from the state of Minnesota, districts will evaluate the statements to identify potential English learners.

The second undertaking of the group was to review current assessment tools used by districts throughout Minnesota to screen for potential English learners by evaluating the student's English proficiency. The screening tools being used included the WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) and the Measure of Developing English Language (MODEL), both WIDA products, and the Language Assessment Scale (LAS). Moving forward, Minnesota has adopted the WIDA Screener, online and paper, for grades 1-12 and the W-APT or WIDA MODAL for kindergarten. Minnesota Standardized Statewide EL Procedures for screening can be found on the [Minnesota Department of Education website](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/el/) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/el/>).

Similar to the proficiency group, the procedures group also reviewed and recommended new scores for English proficiency on the state-chosen screeners. Using the ACCESS 2.0 definition of English proficiency approved by the commissioner, the group recommended adopting a similar score of 4.5 with no domain below a 3.5. Since the student in the identification process would not have participated in the newly enrolled school district, additional criteria could not be applied to domain scores below 3.5.

The procedures group created a manual to be used by every Minnesota public school district and charter school. *Minnesota Standardized Statewide EL Procedures* for identification, entrance and exit can be found on the [Minnesota Department of Education website](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/el/) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/el/>). This manual lists step-by-step procedures and criteria needed for standardization of identification, entrance and exit decisions for all Minnesota English learners. In the future, the established English Learner Stakeholder Input Group (ELSIG) will review the manual for required updates. See the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)'s website for [additional information on ELSIG](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/about/adv/active/ELSIG/) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/about/adv/active/ELSIG/>).

MDE ensures that all potential ELs are assessed for EL proficiency within 30 days of enrollment. Included within the standardized procedure manual are instructions to test all English learners with 30 days of enrollment in a district at the beginning of the school year and within 10 days of enrollment during the school year. Moreover, all districts submit an assurance with their Title I and Title III application that any potential English learner is screened for English language proficiency within 30 days. This component of students being screened within 30 days of enrollment is also an element included in Minnesota's monitoring process. All districts are also required to enter student data, including specific English learner and home language of the student, by October 1.

Moving forward, a stakeholder working group will be established to review the material for use with students who qualify for an Individual Education Program. The participants in this group will consist of teachers and coordinators who work with EL students, students receiving special education services and dually identified students as well as parents and non-profit groups.

The Minnesota Department of Education developed a communications plan to roll-out the statewide standardized criteria for entry and exit procedures. During the described process above, all meeting presentations and notes were placed on the MDE website, including the EL manual created by the procedures group. Changes have been communicated through media outlets, the weekly superintendent's email, the ESEA listserv, the EL newsletter, the EL monthly webinar and others. As the statewide criteria and procedures continue to be used, MDE will revise and amend our communications to ensure that all districts are aware of the new criteria and procedures so they may implement them.

See Appendix B: Minnesota Standardized English Learner Procedures: Identification, Entrance and Exit.

2. SEA Support for English Learner Progress (ESEA section 3113(b)(6)): Describe how the SEA will assist eligible entities in meeting:
 - i. The State-designed long-term goals established under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(ii), including measurements of interim progress towards meeting such goals, based on the State's English language proficiency assessments under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(G); and
 - ii. The challenging State academic standards.

Minnesota's short and long-term goals towards English language proficiency and the established EL growth model were created with feedback from various stakeholders who came to the meetings and actively participated in their formation. During the 2016-17, meetings were held across the state, meeting notes were published on the MDE website, and individuals were welcome to the meetings to understand the transparency of the building blocks. Upon finalization of the ESSA accountability system including EL goals, the Minnesota Department of Education reached out to a variety of stakeholders to share the system; all of the goals and targets are pointless without communication. The department met with a variety of participants including districts, schools, teachers, parents, families and communities to convey how the goals were established and the importance of students attaining them.

Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.63, makes it clear that the SEA must provide technical assistance to districts receiving state aid for English learners—all Minnesota districts who have one English learner qualify. Technical assistance is all districts but with an emphasis to districts who have large number of English learners with limited and/or interrupted schooling, long-term English learners (LTEs), large number of ELs and ELs with low rates of student growth towards English proficiency. Technical assistance varies based upon the district's need but could include telephone calls, visits, emails, webinars and conferences.

Since all English learners (ELs) are required to participate annually in the English language proficiency assessment to assess the growth towards English proficiency as well as beginning in third grade, participating in assessments of challenging academic standards in both reading and math, the SEA is able to track schools' attainment of students' goals and targets. The state of Minnesota, as required by state law, provides individual student growth reports, school reports and district reports during the late spring and early summer upon

completion of assessment. The schools' and districts' assessment results are available to the public on the Minnesota Department of Education's website report card without specific students' individual results. As explained in the accountability section above, schools are ranked in three different stages.

In the past, Minnesota has conducted numerous trainings and professional development for district and school staff working with the English learner population. Trainings have included direct one-on-one principal leadership training, data training and understanding its use in the district and school level, WIDA trainings both for K-12 EL and content teachers as well as pre-K teachers, and participation trainings during professional organization's conference. The Minnesota Department of Education also has included tools and resources on their website; notes and deliverables from ELSIG have been posted as well.

Schools also have access to the specialists at the six Regional Centers of Excellence. In addition to content expertise, center specialists offer an outside perspective on schools' efforts to increase student achievement. They guide and support staff at identified schools through the process of needs assessment, building and strengthening leadership teams, and developing continuous improvement plans.

Despite large numbers of professionals participating in the activities, it continues to be important to measure the influence in affecting the long-term goals for English learners in Minnesota. As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.63, as well as Title III of ESSA, all districts must provide professional development for teachers and other educational staff regarding teaching methods, curriculum development, testing and testing mechanisms, and the development of instructional materials which address the needs of English learners. To assist districts in fulfilling these requirements, MDE has employed a variety of techniques including teaming with WIDA to train three cadres of trainers, one for preschool age and the two for K-12. Additionally, MDE partners with the local TESOL affiliate and others to sponsor conferences and events where focus is on improving the outcomes for ELs.

Therefore, during the summer of 2017, the Minnesota Department of Education's English learner team began conducting a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) of the local educational agencies including charter schools. During the first step, the team has identified major concerns, established the scope and focus of the assessment and selected preliminary priorities. This fall, the EL team working with a variety of stakeholders will identify the needs of districts in assisting the students in reaching both English language proficiency goals and challenging academic standards. Initial priorities from the CNA will then be used with stakeholder data to set a priority of needs, research potential solutions, select solutions and develop an action plan. As soon as the CNA is completed, the EL team will begin adopting the action plan and employ strategies to meet the recognized needs. Following a year of using the action plan, an evaluation will be conducted to review priorities and goals established in the CNA. Using this data, the action plan will be updated and changed if needed to have additional impact on the English learners in Minnesota. Using the continuous improvement cycle, deliberately assigning priorities and goals, the department will be able to evaluate the action plan, the effect of training, and the improvement of the EL population towards proficiency.

The growth model that was adopted for the English learner's progress towards English language proficiency consists of two different criteria: the content grade and the English language level the student is enrolled in. Using statewide EL data, the SEA examined the average years it took for each EL student in a grade to reach English language proficiency. Unlike national data, the state's actual years to proficiency is longer. Using this

data, target rates were established for each grade level and English language level of a student. While most students seem to become proficient in Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) within several years, state data indicated that it takes seven years for most age groups and English levels to reach proficiency.

All Minnesota English language instructional programs must be based upon sound theory. Currently, the state is compiling a list of English language programming that is evidence based. Additionally, all districts are provided with state funds to help ensure that the programming is implemented with fidelity. Furthermore, all districts are asked to evaluate their programming to ensure that the Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP) is successful. Tools and resources are available on the MDE website. SEA staff attend national conferences to ensure that the training that they are providing is the most up-to-date and relevant.

3. Monitoring and Technical Assistance (ESEA section 3113(b)(8)): Describe:

- i. How the SEA will monitor the progress of each eligible entity receiving a Title III, Part A subgrant in helping English learners achieve English proficiency; and
- ii. The steps the SEA will take to further assist eligible entities if the strategies funded under Title III, Part A are not effective, such as providing technical assistance and modifying such strategies.

The Minnesota Department of Education monitors Title III entities in several different ways. First, all districts applying for Title III funds must submit a comprehensive needs assessment based upon EL data; progress towards proficiency and meeting the recommended growth target. Based upon the CNA, districts design an English language development program which supports their students' needs. The language instruction education program is also based upon sound educational theory and research proven. Before the application is funded, staff at MDE review the planned LIEP, confirm that the district's strategy based upon ELs' needs, and ensure that the implementation will be fiducially funded.

Since all Minnesota English language instructional programs must be based upon sound theory; currently, the state is compiling a list of English language programming that is researched-based that districts can review after completing their English learner CNA. Furthermore, all districts are asked to evaluate their programming to ensure that the LIEP is successful. During the annual application status, districts are asked to review and evaluate the success of their English learner's growth towards proficiency and adjust the upcoming strategy to ensure additional progress towards proficiency. As noted above, tools and resources are on the MDE website, which allow districts to review their programing.

Secondly, annual monitoring reviews of districts are conducted. These reviews are either conducted at the department (desk reviews) or at the district (onsite reviews). Both types of reviews ask the district to provide evidence and support of critical compliance elements that follow the federal requirements of Title III, including nonpublic consultation, teacher qualifications, program data desegregation and equity for all ELs. If the district is unable to meet the criteria required during the monitoring, the district, assisted by MDE staff, establish a corrective action plan with specific goals and timelines for district and student improvement.

Throughout the year, English learner specialists will continue to provide support to pre-K through grade 12 schools and districts. This support includes data gathering and analysis with districts; professional development for both EL and non-EL staff on specific district needs; and delivery and training of specific topics statewide. Additionally, staff will be assisting the Regional Centers of Excellence staff who are working directly with schools

which are in the bottom percentiles of English learner’s growth towards English language performance. Using the School Improvement Theory of Action, the specialists will work with specific underperforming districts to improve outcomes for ELs and conditions for teaching and learning.

Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.63, makes it clear that the SEA must provide technical assistance to districts receiving state aid for English learners—all Minnesota districts who have one English learner qualify. Technical assistance is all districts but with an emphasis to districts who have large number of English learners with limited and/or interrupted schooling, long-term English learners (LTELs), large number of ELs and ELs with low rates of student growth towards English proficiency.