

Guidance for Reclassification of English Language Learners

Introduction

This document provides guidance for the reclassification of English Language Learners (ELLs) from ELL to Formerly Limited-English Proficient (FLEP), a procedure outlined in [Bulletin 0702 Procedures for Exiting English Language Learners to Fully English Proficient Status](http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/files/esea/pdf/bul_0702.pdf) (http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/files/esea/pdf/bul_0702.pdf). FLEP corresponds to individual student enrollment system (ISES) English Language Proficiency (ELP) code 6.

Summary of Guidance

While Bulletin 0702 serves as the basis for this guidance, Department of Public Instruction (DPI) strongly recommends the following criteria be met prior to reclassification being considered:

For students in grades K-4:

- An Overall Composite score of 6.0 on the ACCESS for ELLs® assessment.

For students in grades 4-12:

- An Overall Composite score of 6.0 on the ACCESS for ELLs® assessment.
- or
- Both an Overall Composite and a Literary Composite score greater than 5.0 on the ACCESS for ELLs® assessment.

Background

ELL Demographics in Wisconsin

Wisconsin's ELL population represents a broad range of academic and linguistic experiences, resources, and needs. There are approximately 48,000 ELLs in the state, and this population spans 130 different languages and nearly 1,000 migrant students. While the majority of students are Spanish-speaking, approximately 18 percent are Hmong speakers. The largest cohort of students is born in the United States and lives in urban areas. However, we are seeing an increase in students from Middle Eastern and African nations, as well as an increase in ELL students residing in more rural communities throughout the state. These students are arriving with a broad range of experiences. They span from older students with little or no access to schooling to students with exceptional formal schooling, more advanced than their English-speaking peers. Wisconsin has populations of students just beginning to learn English as well as others identified as fully-functional bilinguals.

These changing demographics, varying linguistic experiences, and the unique characteristics of the communities and schools in which our ELL students reside have pushed Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to provide a rich array of ELL and bilingual and bicultural programs. This increase in diversity of LEA ELL programs is driving changes at the State Education Agency (SEA) level, with the goal of supporting both ELLs and the LEAs that provide services for them.

One component of state-level support is a reclassification of ELL designed to ensure that students have secured a base-level English proficiency that meets federal and state statutes. DPI has used numerous sources to create a functional reclassification of ELL including Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, combined with subsequent court rulings clarifying these acts. DPI's reclassification of ELL meets these legal requirements, yet remains flexible enough to support the complex characteristics of this diverse population and the programs that serve it.

ACCESS for ELLs® and Tier Consideration

ACCESS for ELLs® is a large-scale assessment of the English language development standards which serves as the basis for measuring students' social and academic ELP in Wisconsin. ACCESS for ELLs® comes in three Tiers designed for different levels of English proficiency. Tier A is for novice ELL students, Tier B is for intermediate students, and Tier C is for advanced ELL students.

Two types of scores are generated from ACCESS for ELLs® assessments:

1. ACCESS for ELLs® domain and composite scores. These are captured by DPI as numbers with single decimal place precision, ranging from 0.0 to 6.0.
2. ELP score or code is derived primarily from an interpretation of ACCESS for ELLs® scores. These are integer values from 1-7, where 1-5 represent ACCESS for ELLs® scoring, truncated down, 6 indicates a student who has exited ELL status, and 7 indicates that a student was never classified as ELL. ELP codes are entered into the ISES.

ACCESS for ELLs® Tiers A and B have a cap on the maximum score that can be achieved in selected sub-domains¹. These caps are 4.0 for Tier A and 5.0 for Tier B. Students with an ELP score near these caps run into two issues stemming from the scoring and reporting of their assessments:

1. It takes relatively few errors to drop a few tenths of a point down from the cap. This is because the top of the score range is narrower than the bottom, and it's hard to get a 'perfect' score.
2. The ACCESS for ELLs® Overall Composite score is rounded down to the nearest whole number when converted to an ELP code in ISES. A student with an Overall Composite score of 4.9 will receive an ELP code of 4 in ISES. **Scores below 5 cannot be manually changed in ISES.**

¹ Listening and Reading and the Comprehension composite score.

Due to these reasons, it's appropriate to test students on a higher tier if they may be close to the cap on the current Tier. Scores are psychometrically valid between Tiers, meaning a 5.0 on Tier B is the same as a 5.0 on Tier C. However, the measurement error in the Tier B assessment will be slightly higher for students near 5.0, due to the cap of 5.0 on some sub-domains. **When in doubt, it is appropriate to test on the higher Tier.**

Reclassification Guidance

While ACCESS for ELLs® scores are a good indicator of student proficiency, DPI recommends that multiple measures always be used to determine proficiency. An ACCESS for ELLs® Overall Composite Score of 5.0 or above is recognized as an indicator of student proficiency, but LEAs still have a responsibility to determine if a student should continue in ELL classification or be exited. Districts are encouraged to put in place a formal decision-making procedure for examining data and multiple forms of evidence to determine if a student should remain as ELL or be reclassified as ELP 6 and exited from both ELL status and program services.

Reclassification of Students in Grades K-3

DPI permits, but does not recommend, the reclassification of students in Grades K-3 without an Overall Composite score of 6.0, for the following reasons:

- As students progress through school, academic content becomes more dynamic and complex. For ELL students to successfully engage with academic content, they must know enough academic language to acquire new knowledge and skills, and to show what they know and can do in academic subjects.
- In the early grades, there may not be sufficient evidence from grade-level, appropriately aligned academic content assessments that allow students to demonstrate understanding of content-knowledge, distinct from language demands.

DPI's reclassification protocol permits districts to reclassify students in early grades in order to provide districts with the flexibility to address unique circumstances which may result in inaccurate measurements of a student's ELP. An example of such a situation would be when a student's discomfort with testing negatively affects their ACCESS test score, yet the student clearly and overwhelmingly demonstrates academic success without language supports, possibly above and beyond that of their English-speaking peers. Examples of such academic success might include participation in advanced placement courses, work samples that show above grade-level work in English or advanced scores on standardized assessments where linguistic supports or accommodations are not provided.

Reclassification of Students in Grades 4-12

For students in grades 4-12 who have not yet reached an Overall Composite Score of 6.0, decision-making teams should consider the level of student independence before reclassifying them. Students may be ready for reclassification with an Overall Composite Score of 5.0 or greater, and they should be considered for reclassification when their Overall Composite and

Literary Composite Scores are 5.0 or greater. Suggested considerations for reclassification include:

- The language support the student is currently accessing through the ELL or bilingual program.
- Classroom and assessment accommodations.
- Language scaffolds and supports available to the student on a regular basis.
- Differentiated instruction essential to learning language and content in a non-ELL program setting.
- Program and service support accessible to the student outside of the ELL or Bilingual program.

Further Reclassification Considerations

If a student who has reached their reclassification threshold continues to benefit from ELL services, or if they require scaffolded linguistic supports and accommodations to access content in classroom instruction and on standardized assessments, a slightly longer-term transition plan may be required. Decision-making teams can choose to maintain the student as ELP 5, provided they ensure that a transition process is in place. If a student does not require the supports provided through the ELL program, and shows clear evidence of success via multiple measures, a district is expected to reclassify the student to fully English Proficient. Once a student is reclassified, they are no longer administered the ACCESS for ELLs®.

Multiple Measures

Any assessment represents a sample of a student's knowledge at a single point in time, and a large number of factors can influence how well a student performs on any given day. DPI recommends the use of multiple measures when determining reclassification of ELLs for this reason. While the measures chosen by a LEA may vary, the DPI suggests considering some of the following when making such a determination:

- State academic content assessments included in the WSAS including The ACT Plus Writing, Aspire, WorkKeys, Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE), and Smarter Balanced (when available).
- District-level standardized assessments such as Aimsweb, MAP, Fountas, and Pinnell.
- District-created core, standardized assessments – such as 9 grade writing samples and reading records.
- Classroom grade-level curriculum derived assessments.
- Writing samples and assessments such as final or unit exams.
- Formative assessment activities that include formal and informal curriculum-embedded tasks.
- Note: course grades in and of themselves do not serve as a reliable stand-alone measure.

In making any decision using assessments, decision-making teams are reminded that the interaction between an ELL student's academic content knowledge and their ELP affects an assessment's validity as well as reliability. ELLs are permitted accommodations and linguistic supports on academic content assessments that are designed to reduce linguistic barriers and increase validity, reliability, and fairness. When analyzing student assessment results on

academic content assessments, decision teams should be cognizant of any linguistic supports or accommodations used by the student during the assessments.

ACCESS for ELLs® and ISES ELP Code Timeline

- April:** Districts receive the ACCESS for ELLs® paper-based score reports.
- Late May:** DPI receives scores from MetriTech at the end of the data correction window.
- June:** Scores from MetriTech are uploaded into ISES as truncated ELP codes.
- Late July:** Window for ISES changes opens.

Reclassification and Verification in ISES

Districts may choose to make changes in their own software systems such as Infinite Campus or Skyward at any time. However, changes cannot be made in ISES until July when the year-end third-Friday window is open.

For students who receive an Overall Composite of less than 5.0 on the ACCESS for ELLs®, changes in ISES are automatically set and **cannot** be altered by the district. For students with Overall Composite scores of 5.0 or above, districts must verify that the ELP code in ISES reflects the appropriate ELP code for the student.

Post-Reclassification Requirements

Two-year monitoring is required for any student reclassified to ELP 6. Procedures are outlined in [Bulletin O801: Two-Year Monitoring Requirements for Former English Language Learners](http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/files/esea/pdf/bul_0801.pdf) (http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/files/esea/pdf/bul_0801.pdf)



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