

Return to Learn English Learner Guidance 2020-21 School Year



OKLAHOMA
Education



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Introduction

Moving into the 2020-2021 school year while working to minimize the impact and spread of the COVID-19 virus will present multiple challenges to state educators, especially in serving English learners. The following guidance has been created to review EL-specific process and practice issues that districts will address in the identification, coding, and instruction of ELs.

Process Updates

EL Identification

Per OSDE guidance released in spring of the 2019-2020 school year addressing English learner (EL) distance identification, a student provisionally identified as EL through administration of the OSDE developed EL Distance Identification Process was to be coded in the local student information system as 1633/Native English Speaker, but served as an EL for the remainder of the academic year. Districts were instructed to keep a record of any provisionally identified student, assess for EL status in-person with the WIDA Screener when safe to do so, and then correct student coding where necessary.

At the outset of the 2020-2021 school year, districts remain responsible for the assessment and identification of potential EL students in accordance with the established state identification process, or through the alternate identification process detailed below.

The method of EL assessment and identification will vary depending on student grade level and type of enrollment:

- If a PK-12 potential EL student is enrolled in a traditional, face-to-face instructional program, the district must adhere to the established method of EL identification and administer the in-person OKPKST, K W-APT, or WIDA Screener in order to formally identify the student as an English learner. OSDE strongly encourages districts to implement CDC and OSDH best practices regarding potential COVID-19 transmission and mitigation in the management of all in-person interactions.
- For pre-K students enrolled in a distance learning program, or in a hybrid program that does not allow face-to-face access to the student for the purposes of assessment, the district may identify the student as EL through the use of the Distance OKPKST. A student receiving a “NO” score to four or more questions may be formally coded as 2349/English Learner/Limited English Proficient in the local student information system and shall be formally served as English learner. Students identified in this manner will qualify for Bilingual State Aid supplemental funds. The Distance OKPKST may be administered via phone or suitable virtual meeting platform, at district discretion. Please note the following regarding the traditional and distance versions of the OKPKST:
 - A student participating in the Distance OKPKST should be reassessed with the traditional OKPKST upon the return to traditional instruction.
 - A student administered either the traditional or Distance OKPKST must participate in the WIDA K W-APT (or K-Screener, pending release by WIDA) at the outset of their kindergarten year, regardless of OKPKST score achieved.

- If a K-12 student is enrolled in a distance learning program, or in a hybrid program that does not allow face-to-face access to the student for the purposes of assessment, the district may identify the student as EL through use of the WIDA Remote Screener.
 - For kindergarten and first semester, first grade students:
 - A WIDA Remote Screener score in any of the three score bands justifies formal EL status and the student may be coded as 2349/English Learner/Limited English Proficient in the local student information system and shall be served as English learner. If a kindergarten or first semester first grade student begins the 2020-2021 school year in a distance education model and is identified and served remotely as an EL, that student is not required to reassess with the K W-APT (or WIDA Screener) upon returning to traditional face-to-face instruction. Students identified in this manner will qualify for Bilingual State Aid supplemental funds and will be included in the state-level counts applicable to Title III eligibility.
 - For second semester, first grade to twelfth grade students:
 - A student achieving a score in either the low or mid-range scoring bands on the WIDA Remote Screener may be coded as 2349/English Learner/Limited English Proficient in the local student information system and shall be served as an English learner. Students identified in this manner will qualify for Bilingual State Aid supplemental funds and will be included in the state-level counts applicable to Title III eligibility.

Please note the following:

- Any student that was provisionally identified as EL through the OSDE developed EL Distance Identification Process released in spring of the 2019-2020 school year must be reassessed with either the traditional or WIDA Remote Screener as soon as it is feasible to do so. The provisional EL identification of a student reached through administration of the OSDE-developed EL Distance Identification Process does not justify formal EL status in the 2020-2021 school year.
- **A second semester, first grade to twelfth grade student assessed with the WIDA Remote Screener must be re-assessed with the traditional WIDA Screener upon the student’s return to a traditional learning environment. Reassessment with the traditional Screener must occur regardless of the score received on the Remote Screener.**
- Both certified teachers and district paraprofessionals may administer and score the WIDA Remote Screener, but it is incumbent upon the district to ensure that staff administering and scoring the assessment complete the WIDA Remote Screener training module(s). District staff can access Remote Screener training resources on their WIDA Secure Portal page located on the [WIDA website](#).
- The WIDA Remote Screener must be administered by district staff in accordance with the procedures and guidelines provided by WIDA. Noting that WIDA guidance considers it best practice to ensure student access to specific, hard-copy assessment materials in the administration of the Remote Screener, districts are granted the flexibility to administer the Kindergarten-First Grade version of the assessment virtually, at their discretion.

EL Identification Assessment Timelines

Pending USDE guidance allowing state flexibility, the 30-day/two-week requirement to assess a student for EL status remains in effect for the 2020-2021 school year. This being said, the OSDE acknowledges that the number of potential ELs enrolled in distance learning programs and unavailable for face-to-face assessment may lead to challenges in successfully identifying all students within this timeframe. In cases where a district is unable to meet the federal requirement detailed above, the district is encouraged to retain documentation related to the following:

- The number of potential EL students required to be screened
- Unique concerns regarding COVID-19 transmission and student EL assessment
- Student availability issues due to enrollment in distance or hybrid learning programs
- Additional concerns or challenges pertinent to the issue

This documentation may be requested as part of the 2020-2021 Consolidated Monitoring process if deemed necessary by a district's assigned OSDE Office of Federal Programs Program Specialist.

Band Exit Status

Due to the rapid shift to distance education and the cancellation of all 2019-2020 OSTP and ACT/SAT assessments in the spring of the 2019-2020 school year, the exiting of EL students through the 2019-2020 band exit process has been suspended. This suspension of the process applies to all students, regardless of student grade or participation in the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS assessments.

Oklahoma's approved ESSA plan, Oklahoma EDGE, details the state-created criteria justifying the use of the band exit process, and specifically notes that meeting proficiency on state assessments dictates whether an EL student may be considered proficient. Given the lack of assessment scores that would demonstrate this proficiency, the state is unable to allow reclassification through the band exit process and remain in compliance with our approved ESSA plan.

Please note that the band exit process has been suspended only for the 2019-2020 year. Assuming a return to traditional schooling, and the administration of OSTP assessments in the 2020-2021 school year, the band exit process will again be available as a tool to assist ELs in moving to proficient status.

Less-Often Bilingual Identification

With the cancellation of state testing in the 2019-2020 school year, current OSTP scores will not be a component of 2020-2021 Bilingual identification process. If the student is being served in-person, or in a hybrid program that allows face-to-face assessment, and:

- Has previously demonstrated proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS (i.e., is considered a former EL or "monitored" student)
or
- Has demonstrated proficiency on the WIDA Screener
and
- Has meet the HLS criteria for "less-often" status

The student qualifies for Bilingual funding if the district can document performance at or below the 35th percentile on an OSDE-approved norm-referenced test (NRT). The qualifying NRT score must be from either the current school year or the spring semester of the previous school year.

If the student is being served in a distance learning program that does not allow for face-to-face assessment and:

- Has previously demonstrated proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS (i.e., is considered a former EL or “monitored” student)
- or**
- Has demonstrated proficiency on the WIDA Screener
- and**
- Has meet the HLS criteria for “less-often” status
- Is unavailable for 2020-2021 NRT assessment due to enrollment in a virtual distance learning program or hybrid program not conducive to face-to-face assessment

Districts may qualify the student as Bilingual by providing the most recent available qualifying NRT or English OSTP score. Note that districts may be asked to provide proof of student enrollment in a qualifying learning program for the purposes of the annual Bilingual Audit.

Additional information regarding “more often” and “less often” status, and those NRTs approved by OSDE for the purposes of Bilingual qualification, is available in the Bilingual Count Verification and English Learner Identification Processes packet.

The English Language Academic Plan (ELAP)

As the English Language Academic Plan (ELAP) is a component of both EL instruction and federal Title I compliance, an ELAP will need to be completed for all ELs in the 2020-2021 school year. This ELAP requirement applies to identification results from both the traditional and remote WIDA Screener. Once a student has been assessed and formally identified as an English learner, districts should complete the student ELAP with all deliberate speed and ensure distribution to parents and teachers.

OSDE acknowledges that the effects of the COVID-19 virus may present challenges to the timely completion of all necessary ELAPs. In cases where a district is unable to meet the federal requirement detailed above, the district is encouraged to retain documentation related to the following:

- The number of potential EL students required to be screened
- Unique concerns regarding COVID-19 transmission and student EL assessment
- Student availability issues due to enrollment in distance or hybrid learning programs
- Additional concerns or challenges pertinent to the issue

This documentation may be requested as part of the 2020-2021 Consolidated Monitoring process if deemed necessary by a district’s assigned OSDE Office of Federal Programs Program Specialist.

Status of the 2019-2020 ELPA Indicator

Guidance detailing how 2019-2020 WIDA assessment scores will relate to individual student growth targets and site accountability is currently under development.

Future Updates

Additional EL-specific policy updates, or revisions to the guidance above, will be released as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve and/or additional flexibilities or allowances are determined.

The OSDE Office of English Language Proficiency salutes the efforts of all Oklahoma educators working to ensure the educational success of our state English learners. For any questions or concerns regarding this guidance, or any other EL-related issues, please feel free to reach out to us at your convenience.

Best Practices

Addressing Learning Gaps with English Learners

Many students likely made less than expected growth in the 2019-2020 school year, and this is especially true for at-risk students such as English learners. Additionally, the lack of OSTP assessment scores for the 2019-2020 school year makes an awareness of potential student learning gaps even more challenging. Districts should make every effort to use all available assessment scores to identify both students-specific and group learning needs. For all EL students, districts should have available:

- The most recent Screener scores or 2019-2020 ACCESS / Alternate ACCESS scores
- Performance data generated from locally administered norm-referenced tests (e.g., STAR, Dibbels, etc.)

Additionally, districts are encouraged to take advantage of the WIDA MODEL to provide additional domain-specific data regarding English Language proficiency. Use of the MODEL may be especially valuable in assessing the current level of English language proficiency across all four domains of speech for those previously identified ELs or long-term English learners (LTELs) that may have had little to no formal instruction in English for multiple months.

Please note that while the state of Oklahoma bears the cost of the WIDA Screener and ACCESS assessments, administration of the WIDA MODEL would come at district expense.

Instruction

English learners will be engaging in multiple modes of learning at the outset of the 2020-2021 school year, but whether that instruction is in-person, distance, or a hybrid of each, the following points are critical:

- EL instruction should be informed to the greatest degree possible by domain-specific student assessment data and targeted at the learning needs identified in that data
- Instruction should consistently and repeatedly ask EL students to engage with the academic content through the four domains of speech (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)

To best ensure these points are translated to effective instruction, specific best practices are required at each level of administration and instruction.

At the district level, administrators should:

- Make every effort to ensure that appropriate personnel (e.g., curriculum coordinators, district and/or site data teams, teachers, etc.) have access to and time allotted for the review of ACCESS assessment scores (and MODEL scores, if available) to better understand individual student learning needs and plan appropriate interventions
- Ensure the district communication tools are accessible and understandable to teachers and site-level administrators and can effectively convey the district's message to EL caregivers

At the site level, administrators should:

- Ensure that teachers have access to completed student ELAPs to inform effective instruction
- Be cognizant of effective EL-specific instructional strategies and require their use in the planning and delivery of instruction across all learning modes
- Oversee site-level data review practices (e.g., ACCESS, MODEL, locally administered NRT's, teacher-created formative assessments, etc.) and work collaboratively with instructional staff to design both site-wide and classroom-specific interventions based on identified common student learning needs, as appropriate
- Ensure policies and practices are implemented to ensure effective EL caregiver contact and support in distance education and hybrid models
- Foster ongoing collaborative efforts between district core content teachers and EL specialists, if applicable

At the classroom level, teachers should:

- Ensure that regardless of the delivery medium (e.g., in-person, virtual, self-paced distance activities, etc.), that instruction continually requires EL students to engage in all four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in varied and meaningful ways when interacting with instructional content and activities
- To the greatest extent possible, ensure that ongoing instruction is predicated on formative assessment data that has accurately identified existing student learning gaps
- Ensure that EL student activities are appropriately accommodated in ways appropriate to the individual student's level of English language proficiency
- Ensure to the greatest extent possible that instruction allows EL students to access core content while continually developing English language proficiency
- Promote the efficacy of distance learning activities by engaging in consistent and positive interactions with parents of ELs to convey learning expectations and provide supplemental parent and student supports

Please note, if districts are assuming an increased level of caregiver engagement to underpin the success of any distance learning initiatives, effectively communicating the district's expectations and available supports in a language the caregiver can understand is critical to that process. Districts should formally assess their communication processes and procedures, and implement any communication best practices learned from the 2019-2020 period of distance learning, to best ensure effective communication with all caregivers in a language they can understand.

Parent and Family Engagement during Distance Learning

In looking at best practices for ELs enrolled in distance learning programs, it is important to recognize that EL families can be a district's most valuable partner. Student engagement within a distance learning program can be strongly influenced by family engagement, and an essential first step in fostering this engagement is to set up a strategic, consistent, and timely way to communicate with families in an understandable language and in an easily accessible format. To do this, it is crucial that districts engage in a formal process of information gathering (e.g., a needs assessment, surveys, etc.) to understand the method of communication most applicable to the unique population they serve.

The following are best practices for communicating and staying connected with EL families throughout remote learning.

Ensure a reliable translation process: A reliable translation process is one that has trusted translation services and a variety of languages available to meet the needs of both district staff and the EL communities they serve. Any tool or service adopted by a district to address this need should be focused on providing district staff and the parents and guardians or ELs the ability to quickly and efficiently send and receive messages in their respective native languages. Examples of web platforms that allow this capability would be TalkingPoints, Google Translate, and Remind, or districts may elect to rely on services that provide phone-based, real-time translation services.

Ensure that communication to ELs families is targeted: It is important for districts to internally collaborate and coordinate within various departments to ensure communication to EL parents and guardians is not overwhelming, confusing, contradictory, or repetitive.

Utilize Technology-Based Communication: Many district staff rely on various social media platforms, web meeting services, a personal or district YouTube channel, or various applications such as Face-Time, What's App or WeChat to connect with students in a distance learning environment. Regardless of the platform, best practice dictates that the instruction should be tailored to the medium. Teachers relying on a traditional style of classroom lecture will likely see less success and student engagement than those that take advantage of any engagement tools built into the platform (virtual discussion rooms, ability to integrate video and/or audio clips, etc.) that serve to vary their students' learning experience.

Employ Consistent and Routine Phone Calls: Districts are encouraged to take advantage of bilingual staff to schedule and make routine check in calls to EL students and their parents or guardians. Districts should also consider offering English-speaking staff training on communicating to diverse families in simplified English if there is no bilingual staff available. Every effort should be made to schedule phone calls at times preferred by the family.

Plan for Communication without Technology: In spite of a district's best efforts, there will likely be students that remain unable to consistently engage in virtual instruction. In cases such as this, district staff should ensure the following:

- That a student's physical address and contact information is updated and correct to ensure delivery of materials sent via traditional mail.
- That applicable translated resources, information, and instructional materials are available during meal pick-up opportunities.
- That district policies and initiatives are effectively shared through community-based organizations, appropriate non-profits, immigrant support groups, the local library system, etc.
- That to the greatest degree possible, pick-up and drop-off opportunities are scheduled in consideration of parental schedules.

Additional Suggestions for Engaging and Connecting with EL Families

- Make every attempt to approach EL families in a culturally responsive manner and with an asset-based mindset. Districts will benefit from EL families that feel their voices are heard and their experience has value to their student's education.
- Acknowledging that issues with housing, income, food security, and social and emotional needs may need to be addressed before significant learning can occur. District communications efforts should attempt to assess these criteria where appropriate.
- Ensure that all district notifications are provided in a language EL parents can understand and are delivered in a manner that is easily accessible.
- To the greatest extent possible, districts should provide clear graphics and/or videos with straight forward instructions, in a language a parent can understand, to explain how to operate devices and software platforms and how to access district instructional resources.
- Offer sample learning schedules to assist parents in structuring learning time at home, especially if there is more than one student in the household.
- Ensure that EL parents and guardians understand how to contact relevant district staff and convey to EL parents and guardians that the district has a formal process in place to address any native language communication issues that may arise.
- Ensure that student learning activities incorporate best practices to support English language development in a distance learning environment.
- Produce and distribute newsletters containing home activities for different subject areas in languages accessible to the parents of ELs.
- Convey to EL parents and guardians that continued learning in the student's heritage language has benefits that will eventually transfer to English. Districts may also elect to provide supplemental resources and literacy activities that support an EL student's heritage language development.

Professional Development

Districts are reminded that serving one or more identified EL requires both the formal adoption of a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) and the training of all appropriate district staff in the specific instructional interventions and practices related to the chosen program. For example, if a district elected to implement a “Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support” model to address EL learning needs, it would then be incumbent upon district leadership to ensure any staff working in an instructional capacity with the district EL population be trained on how to use English as a Second Language supports for ELs placed in a mainstream, English-only classroom.

In addition to the above, the additional learning modes and instructional tools potentially in use at the outset of the 2020-2021 school year may create the need for additional professional development activities. Districts should review their instructional model(s) and ensure appropriate training for teachers and administrators in:

- Effective use of EL-specific functions and methods of accommodation embedded within district virtual learning platforms
- Use of translation software and/or processes provided by the district for the purposes of student instructional accommodations, parent and family communications processes, and district engagement initiatives

Districts should also note that the outset of the 2020-2021 year may see many teachers engaging students with tools and methods they may be unfamiliar with and uncomfortable incorporating into their daily practice. It will likely require a concerted and ongoing effort by district administrative staff to best ensure effective use of new learning resources and practices.

Given the unique and evolving nature of the COVID-19 virus and its effects, districts should consider structuring professional development initiatives with an eye towards ongoing learning and provide training where ongoing teacher and stakeholder feedback indicate support is required.

WIDA Professional Development Opportunities

Districts are also encouraged to take advantage of the online professional development modules provided by WIDA. Starting Sept. 1, 2020, educators in Oklahoma will have access to the 2020-2021 [WIDA's self-paced eWorkshop](#) offerings. The WIDA eWorkshops cover a range of topics intended for a variety of audiences, from K-12 classroom teachers, to ESL specialists, to district and school administrators. All WIDA eWorkshops are available at no cost to state educators and may be accessed at any time.

- **Self-Paced eWorkshop titles, descriptions, and estimated time to complete:**
 - Foundational Concepts: Builds awareness of ELLs, explores the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, and promotes instructional action in the classroom. For K–12 classroom and ESL teachers and school leaders. Estimated time to complete: 10 hours
 - Doing and Talking STEM: Supports educators as they interact with the resources introduced on the Doing and Talking Math and Science website, developed by WIDA researchers. For K–12 science, math, and ESL teachers. Estimated time to complete: 6 hours

- WIDA Writing Rubric Series: Supports educators using the WIDA Writing Rubric to work effectively with multilingual learners in their writing development. For 1–12 ESL teachers. Estimated time to complete: 10 hours
- Leading for Equity: Classroom Walkthrough: Introduces leaders to a classroom walkthrough resource that highlights practices and principles of exemplary and equitable teaching for multilingual learners. For K–12 school leaders. Estimated time to complete: 2 hours
- Classroom Educators: Engaging Newcomer Multilingual Learners: Explores community building and instructional strategies for teachers of multilingual learners who have recently arrived in the U.S. or who are new to U.S. schools. For K–12 classroom teachers. Estimated time to complete: 2 hours
- Developing Language for Learning in Mathematics: Illustrates the benefits of designing mathematics instruction to provide multilingual students opportunities to use language to express their ideas and co-construct ideas with others. For K–12 math and ESL teachers. Estimated time to complete: 4 hours

WIDA and DRC will also be hosting multiple webinars over the coming months addressing WIDA Screener and ACCESS test administration and scoring procedures for the online and paper tests. These webinars are essential resources for new Test Administrators and Test Coordinators who will be managing the WIDA assessment process this school year. More information and login details can be found on the [WIDA Q&A Webinar Schedule](#).

