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Identification of English Learners: Approved Assessment Procedures for Transfer Students

This change in procedures allows non-ELPA21 summative assessment scores to be used in the process of identifying English proficient students enrolling in Iowa schools from non-ELPA21 states.

- The change in procedures is to allow a district the flexibility to consider an out-of-state summative English language proficiency (ELP) assessment. If the time to obtain evidence of such score will surpass the 30-day timeline for identification, the district shall proceed with screening using the ELPA21, [Sec. 3113(b)(2)].
- It is important to note that using a summative ELP assessment for the purpose of identifying a proficient student from another state who is not in need of EL services is not the same as exiting a student from the EL status. **Using a test other than ELPA21 for EXIT is not allowed.** Under ESSA, the state's designated ELP summative assessment must be aligned to the state's adopted ELP standards, [Sec. 1111(b)(2)(G)]. The state's exit procedures must be state-wide and standardized, [Sec. 3113(b)(2)].

There are typically three situations that occur in the process of identifying potential ELs who have previous ELP assessment scores:

- Students moving within the state of Iowa
- Students moving to Iowa from an ELPA21 state
- Students moving to Iowa from a non-ELPA21 state

Students Moving within the State of Iowa

If a Home Language Survey (HLS) indicates a language other than English has influenced a student's language development, the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener is the instrument that is administered to potential English learners (ELs) enrolling in Iowa schools for the purpose of determining proficiency in English and need for an EL Program. When a student moves between Iowa schools, the Dynamic Screener does not need to be re-administered. The incoming district identifies the student as an EL based on the previous district's ELPA21 Dynamic Screener results. If the student arrives with a determination of Proficient on an ELPA21 Summative assessment, the student is not identified as an EL.

Students Moving to Iowa from Another ELPA21 State

When students move to Iowa from another state that administers the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener and Summative assessments, the scores may be used to determine program placement. Students with scores of Emerging and Progressing should be identified as ELs and should continue receiving services. Students arriving with a Proficient determination should not be identified as an EL. Other ELPA21 states are:

- Arkansas
- Louisiana
- Nebraska
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Washington
- West Virginia

Students Moving to Iowa from a Non-ELPA21 State

Students moving to Iowa from a non-ELPA21 state **may** be able to show proficiency as measured by another summative English language proficiency (ELP) instrument. In order to consider another instrument in lieu of a proficient ELPA21 score, **all** of the following criteria must be met:

- The proficient score must be from a **summative** ELP assessment, not a screener;
 - State summative tests include WIDA ACCESS for ELs, LAS LINKS, NYSESLAT (NY), AZELLA (AZ), ELPAC (CA), and TELPAS (TX). Note: All of these assessment systems have a screener component which would *not* be approved for use.
 - Examples of instruments not approved for this purpose are screener-only assessments such as IPT, Woodcock-Munoz, and QIA.
- The instrument should be valid and reliable for measuring English language proficiency, not English language arts;
- The instrument must assess all domains of language—Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing;
- The student’s score determination must be considered Proficient as measured by the instrument;
- Results must be reviewed and approved by the district’s EL Director or EL Assessment Coordinator. The IDOE EL Assessment Consultant should be contacted if there are any questions or concerns.

The district must document that the student’s out-of-state summative ELP assessment score met the above criteria. This documentation along with required approval is to be kept on file in the student’s cumulative file. Documentation must include:

- Name of the test and state in which it was administered
- Date administered and grade level of the student at the time of the assessment
- Proficient score or determination achieved—this should include a Proficiency Level Descriptor (PLD) or other evidence to show the score achieved is Proficient as measured by the assessment
- Name of the district EL coordinator making the determination
- Other evidence to support the decision

If the evidence supporting a score of Proficient on another state’s summative assessment is not clear or there are questions, the district should proceed with testing the student on the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What if a student’s summative score of Proficient is not recent?***
If the Proficient determination meets the criteria, it should be accepted barring some unusual circumstances such as the student having been out of the country for an extended period of time in the interim.
2. ***What if the student scored proficient on a summative ELP assessment, but moved out of the country for an extended time and is now returning to an Iowa school?***
This should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If the student has not had the opportunity to practice English for an extended period of time, screening should always be an option. Students who are out of the country for weeks or a couple of months may not see a change in their skills, however, students who have been out of the country for a time period that stretches into years, likely will need to be reevaluated.
3. ***What if records for the summative ELP score arrive after a student has been screened on the ELPA screener and the scores are conflicting? For example, out-of-state summative result is Proficient and ELPA21 is Progressing?***

This is a situation that will need to be looked at on an individual basis. It comes down to meeting the needs of the student, documenting the evidence for the decision, and timeliness. Additionally, it is important to consider if and how the information has been shared with parents. For example, if parents have not yet been notified, and it is early in the process, it may be less problematic to make a change. If the student has been served and parents have been notified, it may be best to stay with the original decision.

4. ***What if the Proficient score is from the ALT-ACCESS (Alternate ELP Assessment for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities)?***

A Proficient determination from the ALT-ACCESS may be accepted as evidence of the student's proficiency.

5. ***What if obtaining the records becomes difficult and has the potential to extend past the 30-day limit for identification?***

Districts are obligated to complete the identification process within the 30-day time period; therefore, if a district cannot obtain evidence of proficiency within that time frame, the student must be administered the ELPA21 Screener.

6. ***What if a student comes with an ELP score from a previous district, but it is unclear what the score actually means?***

The EL coordinator evaluating the out-of-state score will need to understand the proficiency levels that the test uses to describe the student's skills in order to determine whether the student is considered a Proficient English speaker as measured by the instrument. If the EL coordinator cannot determine what the student's score means, then the ELPA21 Screener should be administered.

7. ***What if the student comes with a Proficient ELP summative score and is, therefore, not initially identified as EL, but over time it becomes clear the student could benefit from services?***

Just as in the case with any former EL who may reenter the program to receive language development services, the student assistance team should meet to determine factors that may be contributing to the student not being successful and apply interventions or other supports. If the team determines that the student is struggling due to language acquisition, then the screener should be administered. If the results of the screener show the student is not proficient, the student will be identified as an EL.

8. ***Would the Home Language Survey (HLS) still be filled out by family?***

Yes, the HLS is always part of the registration process for any new students to the state.

9. ***What if we can ascertain the student scored Proficient on a non-ELPA21 screener and has high grades in recent content classes?***

Unless the district has evidence of a Proficient determination on a Summative ELP Assessment, the student must be administered the ELPA21 Screener to determine proficiency.

10. ***What if the previous school receives information by phone on the student's previous EL history and is able to ascertain the student scored Proficient on the state's ELP summative assessment while waiting for records to arrive?***

The district must make every effort to complete the identification process within the 30-day timeline. It is important to document the necessary information the previous school is able to provide by phone or other means. Districts should proceed based on the phone call evidence with the caveat that if evidence to the contrary arrives, steps will be taken to modify the initial decision. Always keep in mind student privacy concerns when communicating by email. Follow district guidelines on transfer of student data as required by FERPA.

11. ***If students enroll in an Iowa school with a Proficient score from an ELPA21 summative or other out-of-state summative assessment, must the district monitor them?***

In these situations, the time since the assessments were administered may vary widely. The students

should be monitored informally to ensure they are successful in content classes and are not struggling due to language acquisition challenges. It is not necessary to officially code the student as *monitored* in the student information system.

Scenarios

These fictional scenarios were designed to help clarify the guidance and may be used for professional learning opportunities.

1. ***Goy Duol and his family arrive from Grand Island, Nebraska in January of his 8th grade year and begin the enrollment process at Fieldview Middle School in West Des Moines. The HLS indicates Nuer is spoken at home. Goy indicates he took an English test at his previous school a long time ago but thinks he “passed” and does not remember EL teachers helping him. After calling his old school, it is determined Goy scored Proficient on the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener when he arrived in Grand Island three years ago and consequently was not served. Does Goy need to take the Iowa ELPA21 Screener?***

No, the ELPA21 Screener has already been administered. Fieldview Middle School will document the results of the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener results and Goy will not be identified as an EL.

2. ***America is enrolling in second grade at Riverbluff Elementary in Iowa City. Her HLS shows Spanish as her first language. Her mother insists she doesn’t need EL services and that she passed a test at her old school in Platteville, Missouri. In her records, there is a score report from the WIDA ACCESS for ELs test showing that last year America scored Proficient on the assessment. Does America need to take the ELPA21 Screener?***

No, the student scored Proficient on the state’s Summative ELP Assessment. The results will be documented and America will not be served.

3. ***Thao is a 9th grader enrolling in high school in the Storm Lake Community Schools. Thao was most recently enrolled at Yucca Middle School in Phoenix, Arizona. Her school history shows her attending several different schools in both Arizona and California. Thao said she received EL services a few years ago at her old school, but said she didn’t at her most recent school. After making some calls, the most recent ELP assessment results they can find was the screener component of the AZELLA for which she scored Proficient. There is another set of assessment results that appear to be an older CELDT assessment from California but without any accompanying performance level descriptors it is unclear what the results mean. Does Thao need to take the ELPA Screener?***

Yes, the only Proficient score that can be determined is a screening instrument, not a summative. Another state’s Summative ELP assessment Proficient score is necessary to use in lieu of an ELPA21 Screener score.

4. ***Joachim is a native Spanish speaker who attended Kindergarten and first grade at Windy River Elementary in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. In the spring of first grade, he scored Proficient on the ELPA21 summative. Also, due to an extended illness of one of his family members, he and his family moved back to Oaxaca, Mexico. After three years, the family found work in Council Bluffs and returned to the U.S. He is now enrolling in fifth grade. Does Joachim need to take the ELPA21 Screener?***

Yes, since several years have passed since the student was actively speaking English, it is likely he will need services to gain grade-level academic language skills. The ELPA21 screener results will help the district determine if skills were lost and the student is in need of support.