

English Learners and the “Every Student Succeeds Act”

State Goals for Education:

The recent ESSA legislation redefines school accountability for Illinois. Goals within the plan include that 90% or more of Illinois students graduate from high school ready for college and career and 60% of Illinois residents earn high-quality degrees and career credentials by 2025.

EL Demographic Information: Illinois ranks fifth in the nation with an EL population of approximately 10%. The vast majority of English learners are Spanish speaking (78%). Most English learners are enrolled in preschool through third grade and they reside in 82 out of 102 counties in Illinois.

Context:

Illinois is a leading state with regard to early education and a progressive state with regard to Latinos and English Learners. The state leads with a mandate for bilingual education, which begins with early childhood and a school code which requires bilingual education K-12. In 2013, the Seal of Biliteracy legislation for eligible high school seniors was passed. The Seal honors students who demonstrate college readiness in English and high levels of fluency and literacy in a world language. The Seal promotes that Illinois remains economically viable within a global economy. The Illinois accountability system must incentivize these goals.

Theory of Action for English Learners:

If the Illinois school accountability system under ESSA incentivizes schools to provide high quality language assistance programs, then English learners will graduate from high school with the language skills necessary to enroll in post-secondary education or pursue careers in a global society.

Specific Recommendations for the Illinois ESSA Plan:

- ✓ ISBE Board will adopt a long-term goal for ELs as part of the ESSA Plan
- ✓ All EL students in state funded preschool programs will continue to be identified and served prior to Kindergarten.
- ✓ Upon enrollment in the K-12 system, ELs are identified, assessed, and placed into Transitional Bilingual Education or Transitional Programs of Instruction.
- ✓ Beginning in first grade, all ELs will be expected to achieve English proficiency within 5 years.
- ✓ ISBE will redefine criteria for the reclassification of ELs in light of ACCESS 2.0, which is aligned to college readiness standards, by June of 2017.
- ✓ The “N” size for the EL subgroup will remain at 30 in order to be statistically valid.
- ✓ A five year “Growth to Proficiency” statistical model will be employed to calculate progress on English proficiency.
- ✓ ISBE will establish interim targets, once baseline data is analyzed, and report on schools in one of three categories: schools making better than expected growth, schools making adequate growth, and schools making less than adequate growth.
- ✓ ELs will be assessed annually for English proficiency and for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Growth in content areas will be emphasized over attainment.
- ✓ Newly arrived ELs enrolled in their first year in US schools, in grades 3-12, will be assessed in content. Data from the first year will be used as a baseline for calculating growth in subsequent years.
- ✓ Illinois will continue to explore ways in which to insure valid and reliable assessments for Spanish speaking ELs in language arts and science which is promoted by Title I under ESSA.
- ✓ ISBE will establish two distinct subgroups for reporting purposes: active ELs and former ELs.
- ✓ The former EL subgroup will include students through high school graduation in order to provide longitudinal data to inform school improvement.

Rationale for EL Recommendations:

- ✓ ISBE Board will adopt a long-term goal for ELs as part of the ESSA Plan

Current ISBE adopted Board goals do not include a specific mention of English proficiency, now a mandated component of school accountability.
- ✓ All EL students in state funded preschool programs will continue to be identified and served prior to Kindergarten.

Illinois Administrative Rules Part 228 call for ELs enrolling in state funded preschool to be identified, screened and served if their level of English proficiency is below the criteria established by the state.

- ✓ Upon enrollment in the K-12 system, ELs are identified, assessed, and placed into Transitional Bilingual Education or Transitional Programs of Instruction.

The procedure is pursuant to ILSC Article 14 C and is explicitly stated in Administrative Rules Part 228.
- ✓ Beginning in first grade, all ELs will be expected to achieve English proficiency within 5 years.

Kindergarten data will serve as baseline for calculating growth. First grade is compulsory in Illinois and, according to Administrative Rules, defines the first year of EL service. Accountability must align to Administrative Rules.
- ✓ ISBE will redefine criteria for the reclassification of ELs in light of ACCESS 2.0, which is aligned to college readiness standards, by June of 2017.

The newly defined reclassification criteria should be adopted by ISBE in time to be applied to the 2017 data. The current Illinois reclassification criteria are not recommended by experts. Illinois requires students to achieve a 4.2 in reading and writing in order to determine when EL students are ready to transition to the general education program. Research demonstrates that achieving a 5.0 overall composite on ACCESS 2.0 is a sufficient indicator of readiness for the general program. Applying the current reclassification criteria to ACCESS 2.0, results in students remaining in services they may no longer need. The Illinois criteria were adopted with reference to the former version of ACCESS, which was not aligned to college readiness
- ✓ The “N” size for the EL subgroup will remain at 30 in order to be statistically valid.

There is no expert consensus on statistical validity for subgroup sizes less than 30. Illinois has a historical practice, which began under NCLB, of reporting on ELs as a subgroup once a school has thirty or more enrolled.
- ✓ A five year “Growth to Proficiency” statistical model will be employed to calculate progress on English proficiency.

ACCESS data from 2016-17 will serve as the baseline. Student trajectories will be calculated based on their starting level of English proficiency, grade level, and the five year timeline for attaining proficiency. The percentage of students on track for expected growth will be reported at the school level. ISBE will establish interim goals with the collaboration of stakeholders based on data analysis.
- ✓ ISBE will establish interim targets and report on schools in one of three categories: schools making better than expected growth, schools making adequate growth, and schools making less than adequate growth.

Many states are considering placing schools into these three categories as they weight the indicator in the overall accountability system.
- ✓ ELs will be assessed annually for English proficiency and for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Growth in content areas will be emphasized over attainment.

ELs are the only subgroup assessed twice annually for English proficiency and content knowledge. As students grow in their English proficiency, they will perform better on content exams. Measuring the growth of ELs is more realistic for understanding their academic trajectory.
- ✓ Newly arrived ELs enrolled in their first year in US schools, in grades 3-12, will be assessed in content. Data from the first year will be used as a baseline for calculating growth in subsequent years.

Data from first year assessments should not be included in accountability determinations but serve solely for baseline purposes.
- ✓ Illinois will continue to explore ways in which to insure valid and reliable assessments for Spanish speaking ELs in language arts and science, which is promoted by Title I under ESSA.

States such as California, Texas, Minnesota and New York are working towards making Spanish assessments available in language arts and mathematics in order to demonstrate students' knowledge and skills. ESSA Title I strongly encourages states to consider these home language assessments when 30% of the ELs enrolled in the state share the same home language. In Illinois, 78% of ELs are Spanish speaking.
- ✓ ISBE will establish two distinct subgroups for reporting purposes: active ELs and former ELs.

Data from each subgroup can be analyzed for school improvement planning. This practice is strongly recommended by EL national experts. If ELs receive appropriate services, the former EL subgroup should excel on all state metrics commensurate with their English speaking peers.
- ✓ The former EL subgroup will include students through high school graduation in order to provide longitudinal data to inform school improvement.

In order to meet the goals set forth by the ISBE Board and the P-20 Council, it is necessary to monitor longitudinal data well after students have completed their services. Schools that demonstrate success with former ELs over the long-term should be recognized for their success.