

English Learners: ESSA Updates for 2017-18

Tennessee is committed to the success of all students. The All Means All priority area is about providing individualized support and opportunities for every child, with a specific focus on those who are furthest behind.

Similarly, ESSA is about equity and ensuring the federal guardrails are in place for supporting students that have been historically underserved. One significant shift from No Child Left Behind to ESSA is the inclusion of accountability for English learners within Title I, which is the portion of the law that focuses on disadvantaged populations. Tennessee will continue to develop and identify ways to best serve English learners, and the final plan sets in motion multiple changes related to accountability for English learners at the state, district, and school level. The department will continue to engage stakeholders and researchers in best practices for serving English learners, as well as add capacity at the state and local level.

What we heard:

The English learner working group, the accountability working group, and research partners were influential in the decisions made in the ESSA plan and provided guidance throughout the drafting process. Conexion Americas, the Tennessee Equity Coalition, the Urban League, advocates, parents, and stakeholders from across the state participated in webinars, calls, and town halls to share feedback on the draft plan. Feedback included:

- Ensure ELPA indicator has meaningful weight in the school accountability framework
- Increase supports for schools struggling to serve English learners
- Improve reporting and supports for long-term English learners
- Delay recently arrived English learners' inclusion in accountability, but allow for students to demonstrate growth

English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)

The ELPA indicator is included in both school accountability and district accountability. The n-size for the ELPA indicator is 10 valid assessments.

- **School accountability:** Two pathways: schools receive best-of score
 - Achievement: Percent of students exiting EL status, weighted by initial proficiency level
 - Growth: Percent of students meeting or exceeding the growth standard based on prior English proficiency
- **District accountability:** Three pathways: best of absolute performance or growth and value-added
 - Absolute performance: Percent of students exiting EL status, weighted by time in ESL services
 - Growth: Target to increase percentage of students meeting the growth standard
 - Value-added: Percentage of recently exited EL students scoring on track/mastered on the TNReady English language arts assessment

Within the district accountability framework, the value-added pathway for ELPA is a new measure in the ELPA indicator. This measure will count for 50 percent of the ELPA pathway and is a student-level metric based on the percent of students who recently exited EL service (T1-T4) scoring on track/mastered on the TNReady ELA assessment in the current year. This will allow districts to demonstrate how students are performing in the district once the student has exited EL service.

Long-term goal for English language proficiency

There is an opportunity for further study and whether to incorporate age of entry or level of entry as related to expected growth. Additionally, the WIDA ACCESS assessment, which is the test that Tennessee uses to determine English language proficiency, is undergoing standard setting this year, which means Tennessee will have new

baseline data in 2017. At this time, the department proposes that, by 2024-25, 75 percent of English learners will meet the appropriate growth standard on WIDA ACCESS. Tennessee, however, will continue to review and consult with researchers and stakeholders as to the best approach to reflecting English learner proficiency.

Long-term English Learners (LTELs)

TDOE defines long-term ELs (LTELs) as those students having finished their sixth year of ESL instruction without qualifying for exit. All students beginning a seventh year of ESL instruction will be identified as LTELs, and a new metric will be included in the state report card. Tennessee is increasing capacity to serve English learners by adding up to three regional positions and specialists to work directly with schools and districts. The department will develop additional resources and guidance during the 2017-18 school year to share with schools and districts in how best to support LTELs and increase the likelihood of exit.

Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs)

Tennessee is utilizing the new flexibility option in ESSA that allows states up to three years before including RAELs' achievement results on state assessments into accountability frameworks. In year one, RAELs would participate in state assessments, and those results would be excluded from accountability. In year two, RAELs will participate in state assessments, and those results will be included only in the TVAAS growth metric for accountability. Results for all ELs in year three and beyond would be included in both achievement and growth metrics for accountability. The department will continue to work with researchers and stakeholders to determine potential hybrid options for assessing RAELs.

Focus schools identified due to English learners' performance

Tennessee will identify Focus schools after the 2017-18 school year. This designation includes schools in which one or more subgroup(s) are determined to be underperforming based on the school accountability indicators. A school can be identified for multiple subgroups, and 5 percent of eligible schools will be identified for each subgroup. Additionally, all schools earning an overall letter grade of "D" on the school accountability framework will be identified as Focus schools. In order to best serve Focus schools, the department will be work directly with districts and schools to better understand their data and identify challenges, and how to best serve all students. This work will include new staff to support schools identified for English learners and targeted intervention for those schools to better serve ELs.