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Identification of English Learners: Approved Assessment Procedures for Transfer Students

Identifying English Learners Who Transfer from Another State or District

There are typically three situations that occur in the process of identifying potential English learners (ELs) moving in from other districts or states who have previous English language proficiency (ELP) assessment scores:

- Students moving to a new district or nonpublic school within the state of Iowa. In this situation, it is likely the student has taken an ELPA21 assessment, and scores are readily available.
- Students moving to Iowa from another state that administers ELPA21 assessments. These students have likely taken the ELPA21 or the Alt ELPA, but scores may be harder to locate.
- Students moving to Iowa from a non-ELPA21 state. These students have likely not taken ELPA21 assessments.

Students Moving within the State of Iowa

If the Home Language Survey (HLS) indicates a language other than English has influenced a student's language development, the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener or the Alt ELPA Screener are the instruments that are administered to potential English learners (ELs) enrolling in Iowa schools for the purpose of determining proficiency in English and the need for language development services. When a student moves between Iowa schools, however, the Dynamic Screener or the Alt Screener do not need to be re-administered. The incoming district identifies the student as an EL based on the previous district's screener results. If the student arrives with a determination of proficient on an ELPA21 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 ELPA21 assessments, scores from tests taken in other states 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:

- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Connecticut (Alt ELPA Only)
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- Nebraska
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Tennessee
- West Virginia

Students Moving to Iowa from a Non-ELPA21 State

Students moving to Iowa from a non-ELPA21 state will need to be assessed on the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener or the Alt ELPA Screener if the answers to the three required questions on the HLS indicate a language other than English is spoken in the home. Iowa does not accept screener or summative scores from non-ELPA21 states.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What if a student's summative score of proficient is not recent?**

   If the student scored proficient on an ELPA21 assessment in the past, 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. (See question 2.)

2. **What if the student scored proficient on an ELPA21 or Alt ELPA summative 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 may be an option. Students who are out of the country for weeks or a couple of months will not see a significant 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 ELPA21 score arrive after a student has been screened on the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener and the scores are conflicting? For example, the out-of-state ELPA21 summative result is proficient, and the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener is progressing?**

   The student should not be identified as an EL based on the ELPA21 summative determination of proficient. This is a situation that will need to be communicated to the parents if they were notified that the student initially qualified for services. The identification correction should be made to the TIDE student record and the district's student information system, if necessary.

4. **What if the proficient score is from the Alt ELPA? (alternate ELP assessment for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities)?**

   A proficient determination on the Alt ELPA will 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 Title III 30-day time 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 an ELPA21 screener.

6. **What if the student comes with a proficient ELPA21 summative score and so, is 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 (and not other factors such as absenteeism, behaviors, lack of support, motivation, or a disability), 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.

7. **Should the Home Language Survey (HLS) still be filled out if the student was previously enrolled in another Iowa district?**

   While the HLS is always part of the registration process, for students enrolling from another Iowa district, go by the initial survey at the previous district.

8. **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 an ELPA21 assessment, the student must be administered the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener to determine proficiency.

9. **While waiting for records to arrive, what if the school receives information by phone from the previous school regarding the student's EL history and is able to ascertain the student scored proficient on the ELPA21 summative assessment?**

   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.

10. **If a student enrolls in an Iowa school with a proficient score from an ELPA21 summative taken in another state, must the district monitor them?**

    In these situations, the time since the assessment was administered may vary widely. The student 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 Field View 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 and thinks he "passed." He 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. Field View Middle School will document the results of the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener administered at his previous school, and Goy will not be identified as an EL.

2. **America is enrolling in second grade at River Bluff 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 showing that America scored proficient on the assessment last year. Does America need to take the ELPA21 Screener?**

   Yes, the student took a test that was not aligned to Iowa's ELP standards and, as a result, will need to take the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener.

3. **Thao is a 9th grader enrolling in high school at Storm Lake Community Schools. The HLS indicates the family speaks Vietnamese. Thao was most recently enrolled at Lone Star Middle School in San Marcos, Texas. Her school history shows her attending several different schools in both Texas 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 were on the Texas TELPAS screener, on which she scored proficient. Does Thao need to take the ELPA screener?**

   Yes, while the student scored proficient on the Texas screener, the HLS indicates a language other than English, and given that the out-of-state assessment was not developed on Iowa's ELP standards, the student must take the ELPA21 Dynamic Screener.

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. 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 enrolled in fifth grade. Does Joachim need to take the ELPA21 Screener?**

   Likely 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 Dynamic Screener results will help the district determine if skills were lost and if the student needs language support services.