

ESSA English Language Learner Work Group
MacKay Building, Pierre, South Dakota
June 13, 2016

The second meeting of the ESSA English Language Learner Work Group began at 10:00 a.m. on June 13, 2016, in the MacKay Building, Pierre, South Dakota. The ESSA English Language Learner Work Group was formed to make recommendations to the South Dakota Department of Education pertaining to changes in school accountability in the new reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act known as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

Welcome

The group was welcomed by Terri Bissonette, consultant for McRel International North Central Comprehensive Center, facilitator of the group. Bissonette asked for comments or corrections to the notes posted from the last meeting. She also reviewed the process the committee will use to arrive at consensus on items needed for accountability decisions.

Workgroup Membership

Members of the work group present were: Gwyneth Dean-Witte, ESL Consultant and Consultant with ESA 3; Ceci Estes, Belle Fourche School District; Jane Hannemann, Sioux Falls School District; Karen Kindle, University of South Dakota; Joselyn Schmitz, Huron School District; Carla Steffensen, Lake Area Technical Institute; Tanya Vitek, Menno School District; Kerri Whipple, ESL Consultant; and Laura Willemsen, Huron School District.

Review of US Education Proposed Rules and Implications

Laura Scheibe, SD Department of Education Director of Accountability, reviewed some of the highlights of the proposed federal regulations for the ESSA. The regulations have been posted until August 1 for public comments. Scheibe reported that the department will make some written comments for submission. The slides will be distributed to the members via email.

Update on Data

At the first meeting of the work group, the group determined that certain data needed to be run from the state's system to help in decision making. Kerri Whipple, ESL Consultant, gave a brief review of South Dakota data pertaining to the number of years from entrance to exiting (exiting based on ACCESS 2.0 testing scores). A discussion followed on the number of students exiting quickly and the need for the data to be further scrutinized to determine the students who are exiting at a slower rate. Perhaps the data needs to be reviewed more closely per grade spans, ethnicity, language, years in country, and district ELL teachers.

Discussion and Decision Making

A discussion followed on looking at five areas pertaining to English language learners. The areas are 1) time in program, 2) grade level, 3) age, 4) native language proficiency level, and 5) SLIFE students - students with limited and interrupted formal education. The group considered the possibility of adding students with disabilities as a category. The new ESSA law will allow using "former ELL" as a new subgroup. The information that must be reported on the report card is the number of students and the percentage of EL students who have achieved English language proficiency.

A question was asked about how a student is handled who transfers from one district to another at mid-school year. Full Academic Year applies to all indicators. The district where the student is enrolled during

the testing window must test the student and the student counts for participation at the district level; the student counts for accountability at the state level. If a student moves after taking part of the test, we don't have full academic year for that student. The student is counted for participation in the district where the student was on the last day of the testing window.

The work group discussed several areas where decisions must be made to implement the new law.

Recommendations

How to identify students in the Infinite Campus system? The work group decided that long-term English language learner students need to be identified in Infinite Campus. SD DOE will ask that Infinite Campus include a check box where districts will identify the students. A report can be generated through SD STARS to provide information to districts and the state on these students. This will assist in a more accurate way of determining the length of time in the program.

What "N" Size would capture the most data without also revealing personally identifiable data? The work group recommended an "N" Size of 10 students. This is current practice. An "N" size of 10 students captures the accountability data for 97 schools; an "N" size of 5 students would capture the data from 166 schools. However, the smaller the "N" size, the more identifiable the students become. On the other side of the argument, the department will be looking at data over a three-year period; total data not averaging. By looking at a three-year period, more schools/districts will reach the "N" size of 10. Using an "N" size of 30 students would only provide data pertaining to 25 schools/five school districts and not be reflective of the true number of English learners. ESSA allows the option to use one "N" size for accountability calculations and another "N" size for public report card reporting. The work group decided that using two "N" sizes would be complex and difficult to explain to the stakeholders. Additionally, the DOE small school data audits review data for subgroups smaller than 10 and hold the small schools accountable.

Should we assess students with the state English/Language Arts (ELA) assessment during the student's first year in the country? The work group decided not to do ELA testing for new to country students and continue with the current practice of assessing only math participation. The work group had discussed what would be gained by implementing ELA assessments in the first year – would it actually provide baseline data? How would it help the student? Any benefit would be out-weighed by frustration of the students and teachers. Under ESSA English language learners must take the math state assessment during the first year in the country and it counts as participation rate with states having the option of testing ELA during the first year also. During the second year, ELL students must take both ELA and math and the scores count for participation and proficiency. During the third year the students must take both assessments and both are counted for participation, proficiency, and school/district/state accountability.

Needs More Discussion

What is the definition of a long-term English language learner student? The work group did not reach consensus on this topic as more information is needed. Possibly five years would be long-term in South Dakota, however, it appears that many other states use six years as a definition. More information will be gathered. Another unknown is the recalibration of the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA) scoring that may lead to a higher exiting score. Will our students continue to exit in a relatively short time as they do now or will their length of time in the program also increase? As South Dakota students seem to exit relatively quickly is it an anomaly or a credit to the

programming? We may be able to find more data on this point.

What will be our Exit/Entry Criteria? The work group decided that they did not have enough information to determine exit/entrance criteria at this time. As WIDA will be revising their scoring process, the work group will need to wait until early fall to get this information.

What growth targets should the state set? This point will require additional time and information to discuss and arrive at a decision. This will also require looking at the new WIDA growth model information to be completed this fall.

Should K-2 English language learner student achievement data be included in the accountability system?

The work group is considering recommending adding K-2 students to the accountability system and expanding the system to K-12 English learner students. The work group believes that we are not capturing the success of our program as we are not including all grades particularly the K-2 students who attain English proficiency at a quick rate. More discussion and possibly more data will be needed to make a decision on this point.

With the new requirements on parent notification, how will districts be advised by the SD DOE? The work group discussed whether this new notification needs to be included in state rule or law.

Should a category be added for students with disabilities? The work group wants to look at the possibility of discontinuing testing of students who are plateauing because they have reached diminished progression. The student's IEP team would make the decision to stop testing. These students would not exit and would not be reported. The question is whether this would create a new loop hole in our testing.

Should we count students 2 to 4 years after exiting the program (exiting based on ACCESS 2.0 testing scores)? Information on WIDA changes will be needed to determine this. Currently, SD has less rigorous exiting criteria than some states and it is unknown how changes made by WIDA will impact the rate of SD students exiting the program. Topics to be discussed may be progressive benchmarking, weighted years in the program, adjusting proficiency based on the number of years in the program and weighting the domains (reading, writing, listening, speaking) differently based on the grade levels.

More Information Needed

Data will be pulled on grade spans, ethnicity, native language, years in the country, and ELL teachers. Achievement data and student exit information will be pulled. All the information will be provided to the work group.

Notes from the other work group meetings may be found at <http://doe.sd.gov/secretary/essa.aspx>.

Next Meeting

The next meeting may be a presentation of WIDA information and presented as a webinar. The work group may not meet until September or October. Information will be sent to the work group at a later date.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.