

Chapter 5

Supporting Former English Learners

Reclassifying and Exiting English Learners

An English learner is reclassified as fluent upon achieving English language proficiency as defined by the state English language proficiency assessment. In Indiana, English language proficiency is defined as a 5.0 overall composite score on the annual WIDA ACCESS assessment. After achieving a 5.0 on the WIDA ACCESS assessment, an English learner is reclassified as proficient in English and enters a two-year formal academic monitoring period. Although ESSA allows states to extend this timeline, Indiana has chosen to maintain the two-year minimum requirement for rigorous, ongoing monitoring of former English learners.

Former English learners will still be included in the DOE-Language Minority data collection annually, but will no longer generate state and federal EL funding. Students in their two year academic monitoring period may still be provided access to all support services provided through the district's English language development program, if needed; however, they are not eligible for state testing accommodations and will not have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Former English learners must have the same access to the academic supports and interventions available to all students.

Under ESSA, states may choose to include the state content assessment results of former English learners in the EL subgroup for up to four years for accountability purposes. Indiana has chosen to include former English learners in the EL subgroup for the full four years allowable under ESSA.

Parents and families of students reclassified as fluent should be notified of the change in EL status and receive notification of their child's academic monitoring throughout the two-year period following the child's reclassification as fluent.

A student who demonstrates proficiency on the initial English proficiency screener (WIDA Screener or Kindergarten W-APT) is considered fluent upon enrollment, and no formal monitoring period is required. However, if a student who is identified as fluent upon enrollment is later found to have language needs, the process for program reentry detailed below may be followed to reevaluate the student's English proficiency.

Students who transfer from another state or school and have met Indiana's criteria for English language proficiency by scoring a 5.0 on the WIDA ACCESS assessment will be considered proficient. If the student achieved proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS assessment within the previous two years, they should be provided with rigorous, ongoing monitoring in their receiving school until the two year period is complete.

Monitoring Former English Learners

School districts must monitor the academic progress of former English learners for at least two years to ensure they are meaningfully participating in the district's educational program in a manner that is comparable to their native English speaking peers and comparable to other English learners who exited at the same time. Monitoring processes are defined locally, but local education agencies must establish rigorous monitoring systems that include benchmarks for expected growth in acquiring academic content knowledge during the academic year and take appropriate steps to assist students who are not making adequate progress.

Local education agencies must implement a formal process and maintain robust documentation for their EL and content teachers to monitor former English learners. This documentation must include essential data such as the student's grades in each content area, scores on district and state assessments and standardized tests, and teacher observations of student strengths and weaknesses in each of the four language domains and each academic subject. Although academic monitoring processes applied to all students should include former and current English learners, the monitoring system for former English learners must be in addition to general academic monitoring provided to all students, and must be conducted in collaboration with English learner and general education staff.

Upon completion of the two-year monitoring period, local education agencies must ensure:

- Former English learners who have been reclassified as fluent have full access to mainstream curricula
- Any academic deficits resulting from lack of English proficiency have been addressed and remedied
- Any recurring language needs identified through the monitoring process have been addressed and remedied
- Former English learners are meaningfully participating in the standard instructional program in a manner comparable to their native English speaking peers.

The Indiana Department of Education has a responsibility to monitor local education agencies to ensure that current and former English learners have meaningful access to grade-appropriate core content and language instruction. The United States Department of Education has provided additional guidance regarding monitoring and exiting English Learners from EL programming and services in [Chapter 8](#) of the English Learner Tool Kit, which was summarized above.

Developing a Rigorous Monitoring System

When developing a formal, rigorous monitoring system for former English learners, consider the following points:

- What performance expectations and progress indicators do we have for former English learners in each academic subject?

- How carefully and how often do we monitor which former English learners are making adequate progress and which are not?
- Are measures used to monitor students' progress standards-based and do they maintain high expectations?
- How are former English learners meeting grade-level standards after reclassification?
- Are teachers who provide core instruction to former English learners adequately trained in language acquisition and are they aware that fluent students may still struggle with academic English?
- Is there ongoing evaluation of the core curriculum to ensure that former English learners are supported in the continuance of academic English acquisition?

Suggested Indicators for Monitoring Documentation

The following are recommended components for documentation of rigorous monitoring. This list is not exhaustive and should be adjusted to include the most useful and actionable data for the local context.

- Frequency of monitoring checks (e.g. biweekly, quarterly, once a semester)
- Student grades in all content areas
- Summative and formative assessment data (including all state assessments)
- Content teacher observations
- EL staff observations
- Teacher observations of student progress in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Behavior and attendance data

A sample monitoring form can be found in Appendix A. Documentation of the monitoring process should be maintained locally.

Reentering Students in the English Learner Program

When an academic or language need is identified during a former English learner's two-year monitoring period, it is important to consider that all students, regardless of English proficiency or native language, can struggle with core content areas. In order to protect the civil rights of all students, states and local education agencies have an obligation to ensure that state exit criteria allow for appropriate exit from English learner status for students who have achieved English proficiency.

In some instances, students may meet the state criteria for reclassification as fluent without having truly attained English proficiency. In these cases, formal reentry into the English learner program may be appropriate, if all of the following have been implemented:

- Implement a rigorous monitoring system for the student based on state and federal guidance to ensure students meet expected benchmarks and growth.