Blount County Schools

EL District Plan

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PREFACE

A. EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Pursuant to the requirement of Every Student Succeeds Act and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act of 2001, all foster care, homeless, migratory, immigrant, and limited English proficient children in the district will have access to the education and services needed to ensure that an opportunity is available to meet the same academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

The district will ensure that foster care, homeless, migratory, immigrant 5, limited English proficient students are not stigmatized nor segregated on the basis of their individual status. The student will be admitted to the district school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living or to the student's school of origin as requested by the parent, guardian, education decision maker or homeless liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, and in accordance with the student's best interest (*BCS Board Policy, 5.01*).

B. INTRODUCTION

This plan is in place and in compliance with Title III, Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students, of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. It is designed to ensure service for students who have a primary home language other than English, who are identified as immigrants and/or limited English proficient, and where one or more learners are in need of support. The Blount County Schools EL District Plan is in place whether or not Blount County Schools currently have English Learners (ELs) enrolled and regardless of Title III eligibility. The BCS EL District Plan addresses each aspect of the LEA's program at all grade levels and in all schools throughout our system. This plan contains sufficient detail so that every staff member can understand how our plan is to be implemented.

The BCS EL District Plan is available online (www.blountboe.net) at the Blount County District Website and in each principal and/or counselor's office at each of our schools. This plan details how Blount County Schools provide programs, services, and resources to students identified as language minority and English Learners (ELs) or students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Blount County Schools provide appropriate services to EL students at all grade levels and all schools in the school system. It is the goal of all school personnel to help each student make yearly progress on standardized evaluations and reach the highest possible levels of English language and academic proficiency in the shortest time possible.

C. STATE DEFINITIONF of ENGLISH LEARNERS, IMMIGRANT, & MIGRANT

Under ESSA, an English Learner, means an individual -

A. who is aged 3 through 21;
B. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
C. who was not born in the United States, or whose native language is a language other than English;
    a. who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying area; and
        i. who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
        ii. who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
D. whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual -
    a. the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
    b. the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

c. the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Under ESSA, the term **"Immigrant children and youth**" means individuals who -

A. are aged 3-21;
B. were not born in any state, including Puerto Rico and Washington D.C.; and
C. have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years.

The term **"Migrant"** when used with respect to an individual, means:

According to sections 1115(c)(1)(A) (incorporated into the MEP by sections 1304(c)(2), 1115(b), and 1309(3) of the ESEA, and 34 C.F.R. § 200.103(a)), a child is a "migratory child" if the following conditions are met.

A. The child is not older than 21 years of age; **and**
B. The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under State law, **or**

   The child is not yet at a grade level at which the LEA provides a free public education, **and**

C. The child made a qualifying move in the preceding **36 months** as a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or did so with, or to join a parent/guardian or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; **and**
D. With regard to the qualifying move identified in paragraph 3, above, the child moved due to economic necessity from one residence to another residence, **and** –

   a. From one school district to another;

   b. In a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; **or**

   c. Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence.

D. ASSURANCES of TITLE III and TITLE I SUPPLEMENTAL

EL Program Administrator and Blount County Schools Superintendent

Blount County Schools consulted with classroom teachers, EL Teachers, school administrators, parents, education-related community groups, and higher education institutions to develop our BCS EL District Plan. The plan is reviewed at bi-annual Federal Programs Advisory Committee meetings for input. The original plan was approved by the Office of Civil Rights in both 1999 and 2004. Updates are made annually by our team which includes a representative from each school community who works directly with EL Learners, our EL Consulting teacher, and our Federal Programs Coordinator. Changes are made according to input from the outlined stakeholders and LEA changes in adopted curriculums. The BCS EL Plan is reviewed and approved by our Board on an annual basis.

BCS follows ALSDE state guidelines for the implementation of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. WIDA ELP Standards and WIDA Can Do Descriptors are readily available to all core and EL teachers in BCS. The WIDA ELP Standards and Can Do Descriptors are included in ELLevation. All core BCS teachers of ELP students have access to their EL student's ELLevation profile. The complete set of WIDA Standards and Can Do Descriptors are available online at wida.wisc.edu and in each school's EL Team Drive.

All teachers in Blount County Schools are fluent in English and have written and oral communication skills. English fluency is considered established if personnel have a teaching certificate issued by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and have met the highly qualified status of a teacher or instructional aide that the ALSDE requires.

BCS certifies that all teachers in the Title III / Title I Supplemental and core language instruction program for LEPs are fluent in English (the language of instruction in BCS) because all BCS teachers are certified by the ALSDE certification department. **This ALSDE certification assessment process and the BCS employment interview process certify that all BCS-certified teachers employed are fluent in all four language domains of English.**

BCS ensures that all schools comply with serving ELs. Upon enrollment and as part of the registration process, all parents and/or students must complete a Home Language Survey (HLS), and translation assistance is available if needed to complete the HLS. All employees providing registrar assistance are trained on official enrollment procedures concerning HLS administration. **As stated in BCS Policy and Procedures Manual Section 5.1:** enrollment of migrant, immigrant, and limited English proficient children and youth shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers (a) lack of birth certificate, (b) lack of school records or transcripts, (c) lack of immunization or health records, (d) lack of proof of residency, (e) lack of transportation, (f) guardianship or custody requirements. The student will be admitted to the district school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living or to the student's school of origin as requested by the parent, guardian, education decision maker or homeless liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, and in accordance with the student's best interest. **Children may not be excluded from school because they do not have a social security number (*Plyler v. Doe*).**

All individuals used as translators or interpreters are fluent in the language they are translating. BCS provides translations for all school documents, letters to parents, report cards, and other pertinent parent communications.

ELs have equal access to appropriate categorical and other programs but are not limited to special education, gifted education, and after-school care. They are selected on the same basis as other students in BCS.

During EACH IELP Committee meeting, the EL staff member and/or EL translator will verbally explain to ensure comprehension of the parent's and/or guardian's right to withdraw/waive Title III Supplemental EL program services. If a parent or guardian does not attend the IELP committee meeting, the EL staff member will meet individually, in person or by telephone conference, with each non-attending parent to explain withdrawal/waiving rights of Title III Supplemental EL Program services and mandatory CORE EL Language development instructions verbally. Many BCS/EL parents/guardians struggle with English literacy and native language literacy skills. If a parent or guardian chooses to waive Title III Supplemental EL program services, the parent will be given the BCS "Request for Title III Supplemental English Language Development Program Withdrawal/Waiver Form" immediately in both English and Spanish or other languages as needed, and translation assistance is provided orally as needed. Also, parents are made aware that enrollment in CORE EL services and language program testing (ACCESS/WIDA Screener) is **MANDATORY**. **ALL LEP/EL STUDENTS MUST PARTICIPATE IN CORE EL LANGUAGE SERVICES.**

A. Required Theory and Goals
The LEA's educational theory and goals for its program of services - **to improve the education of English learners by assisting the children to learn English and meet the challenging state academic standards. (Sec. 3102)**

EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND GOALS

A. GOAL

All Blount County School personnel aim to help each student meet challenging academic standards and reach the highest possible English language and academic proficiency levels in the shortest time possible.

B. THEORY AND PRACTICE

All EL students will receive core EL instruction by certified teachers in the regular academic program using the Alabama College and Career Readiness Standards and the WIDA English Language Standards approved by the ALSDE. EL students will receive supplemental EL instruction in the EL pull-out program if not waived by the parent/guardian, supplemented by Title III and Title I. As part of our core program, classroom teachers are trained in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) evidence-based strategies to accommodate content for EL students in the regular education classroom. Such strategies as building background knowledge, adaptation of the text, emphasizing essential vocabulary, providing graphics when possible, planning meaningful activities, language functions stated clearly, supplementing materials, using appropriate speech to match the language level of student(s), varying teaching techniques and presentation, teacher questioning to foster higher order thinking skills, lesson pacing, and on-going varied assessment techniques are proven to foster an environment favorable for second language acquisition in regular education classes and supplemental EL pull-out classes. The EL teachers and the regular program teachers confer regularly concerning the academic progress of EL students regarding individual student needs and sheltered instructional strategies. Ongoing, sustained teacher training strengthens teachers' knowledge base and skills in using SDAIE strategies in core regular classrooms and Title III supplemental EL pull-out classes.

WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition for English Language Learners (K-12)

The State of Alabama has adopted these standards to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment for ELs. This program meets the requirements of the federal **Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA,** by linking English language acquisition standards and state academic content standards.

C. INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The profiles of ELs are varied and complex. To meet the needs of these students and achieve the above-stated goal, Blount County Schools employ a mixture of methodologies to best serve the needs of EL students. The process includes activities such as but not limited to reviewing ACCESS scores, reviewing available state-mandated test scores, conducting formal and informal language assessment(s), and implementing instructional practices and tools that will benefit ELs. Information gathering and immediate assessment focus on some combination of the following: (1) academic experience, (2) English-language proficiency, (3) native-language proficiency, (4) learning and behavioral factors, and (5) environmental factors. This information is then used to determine and implement effective instructional practices that focus on content (**Alabama Course of Study)** and language (**WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition for English Language Learners)** objectives as well as cultural awareness and study skills necessary to meet the rigorous academic standards required of all BCS students.

B. IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES
1) Include the LEA's procedures for identifying members for the EL Advisory Committee

EL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The English Learner (EL) Advisory Committee plays a critical role in supporting equitable outcomes for multilingual learners by providing input on EL programs, services, family engagement, and professional development needs. The LEA uses the following procedures to identify and appoint members to the EL Advisory Committee:

A. REPRESENTATION and MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The committee includes a diverse group of stakeholders who reflect the interests and needs of English learners and their families. Members may include:

- Parents or guardians of current English learnersEnglish learner students (secondary level, where appropriate)
- EL teachers
- General education teachers who serve ELs
- School administrators

  Translators/interpreters or family engagement specialists
    a. Representatives from community or faith-based organizations serving EL families

B. NOMINATION and RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- Parent and Community Recruitment: Schools send multilingual communications (translated as needed) to EL families inviting them to participate in the committee. Personal outreach is made during parent events, conferences, or family nights.
- Staff Nomination: School principals and EL coordinators recommend staff members who demonstrate a strong understanding of EL instruction or engagement.
- Student Selection (if applicable): Secondary EL teachers nominate students who demonstrate leadership, engagement, or an interest in advocacy.

C. SELECTION and APPOINTMENT

- Final membership is confirmed by the LEA's Federal Programs office, with the goal of including both new voices and returning members to maintain continuity.

D. MEETING FREQUENCY, PURPOSE, AND DOCUMENTATION

- The EL Advisory Committee meets at least twice per year—once in the fall and once in the spring.
- Agendas include reviewing EL data, evaluating program effectiveness, providing input on professional learning needs, and improving family outreach efforts.
- Sign-in sheets, agendas, minutes, and translated communication materials are maintained for each meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

A. ENROLLMENT POLICY:

a. Registration Form Each school has a registration form to be completed. Registration Forms are available in English and Spanish as well as with the assistance of a translator.

b. Proof of Age May consist of a valid birth certificate, a valid passport, or other official or unofficial document listing date and place of birth, such as a health certificate, a family Bible, or

a written statement from a parent. Enrollment may not be delayed if proof of age is not available. A valid birth certificate is requested but not required for enrollment.

c. **Proof of Immunization** Parents are asked to submit a State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization as soon as possible. Parents are informed that a State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization (Blue Slip) is available at the Blount County Health Department or a physician's office. If needed, translation assistance and appointment assistance are provided to communicate with the Blount County Health Department. The Health Department will assist in establishing a schedule to make immunizations current as quickly as possible. The Health Department will also issue an official immunization certificate that indicates the established schedule based on immunization records from other states and countries. *See Board Policy 5.01*

d. **Social Security Number** A Social Security number is not necessary for enrollment nor for school lunch forms (when applicable). If a student does not have a Social Security card, the appropriate school office staff will assign an identification number.

e. **Home Language Survey (HLS)**This is a survey to determine the student's home language. It is used as an identification tool for potential EL students and is a part of the enrollment process. The Home Language Survey (HLS) should be signed by the parents of students in grades K-6, but it can be signed by the students or parents in grades 7-12. Immediate translation assistance will be provided during the completion of the HLS as needed. This form identifies the first language spoken by the student, the language spoken in the home, the language the child speaks outside of the home, the language the parent/guardian reads, the language the student reads, and the child's native language. <u>This form will be filed in the permanent record of each student in the school system or recorded in PowerSchool.</u> If any language other than English is marked, the registrar submits a copy of the Home Language Survey to the EL teacher <u>immediately</u> to ensure proper assessment of language proficiency and possible placement within the Title III Supplemental EL and Core Programs. However, the presence of a language other than English does not automatically signify that the student is not a competent and proficient speaker of English. The HLS also identifies the appropriate language to send school communications to parents/guardians. A BCS flowchart outlines the appropriate pathways for placement, exiting, and monitoring of an EL student. When **all responses on the HLS indicate that English is the only language used by the student and individuals in the home**, the student is considered an **English-only speaker.** Procedures established by the school system for placement in the general student population should be followed.

f. **Former School Records** BCS requests parents or guardians provide former school records, report cards, and/or transcripts from outside the United States. The school will make a request for international documents in the appropriate language to the school of last attendance if the parent does not have the records or the ability to obtain such records. BCS will also evaluate and translate records from another country for applicable credits. BCS will request official transcripts and documents from the previous school(s) within the United States. No student will be denied enrollment or proper grade placement because former school records cannot be secured.

g. **Employment Survey** Each parent/guardian completes a copy of the employment survey at the time of student registration, and the survey is sent to the BCS migrant recruiter/parent liaison at the Blount County Schools Professional Development Center. This form assists the LEA in identifying migrant families. The local school sends the completed forms to the migrant recruiter/parent liaison for immediate follow-up.

h. **Proof of Residence** A copy of a lease, rental, or purchase agreement for a residence, indicating the address of the residence, is accepted as proof. A copy of a utility bill mailed to the residence is also acceptable. If the student is determined to be homeless, this requirement is waived. Enrollment may not be delayed if proof of residence is not available.

i. **Registration and Health Forms** Registration and health forms should be completed by the parent/guardian, and a translator's assistance will be provided if necessary. All information is

necessary, including home and emergency telephone numbers. Registration and health forms are also available in Spanish.

j. School Lunch Forms BCS is currently participating in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP). Both breakfast and lunch are served to all learners free of charge, in all of our schools.

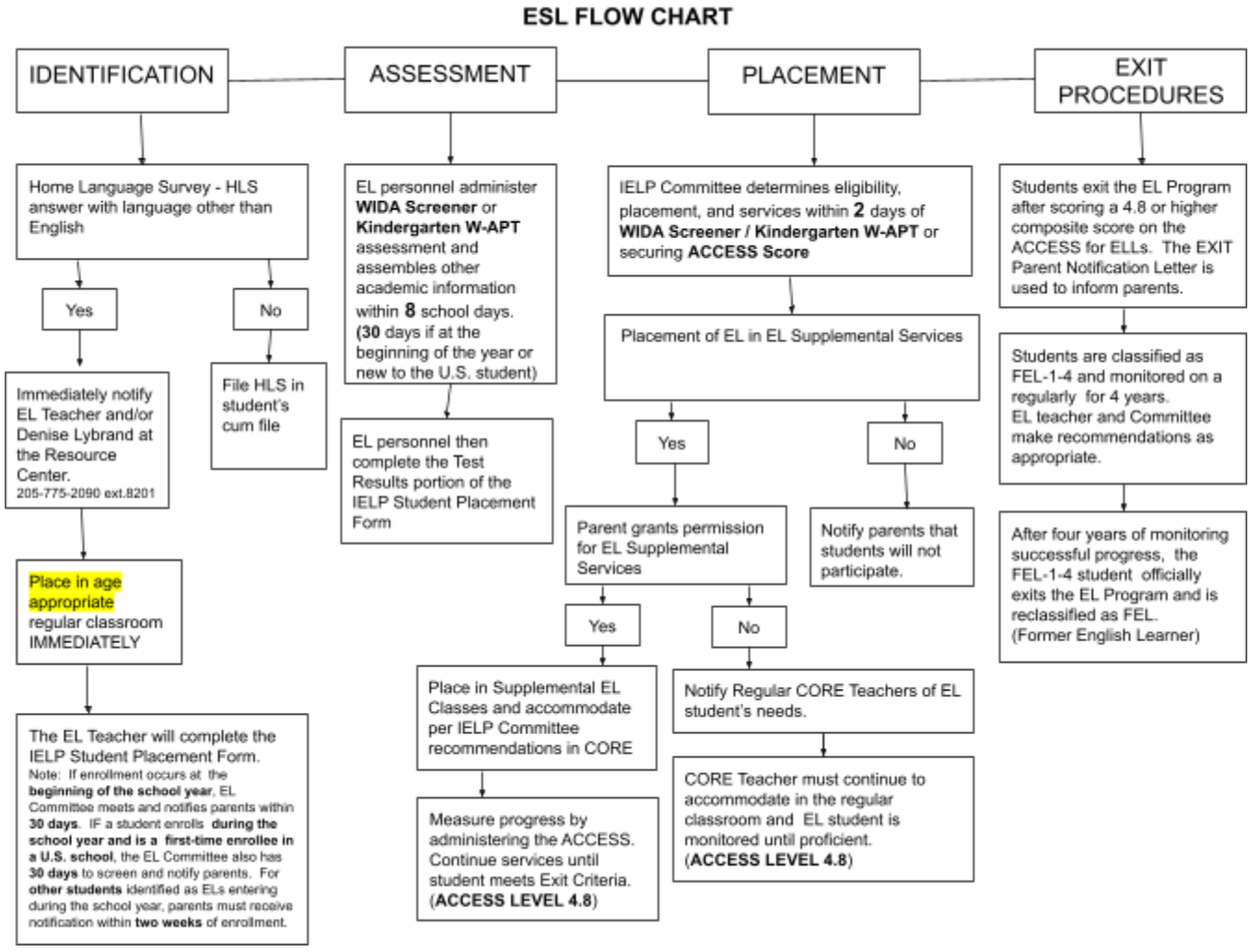
k. Original Entry Date The LEA will record the registration date as the original entry date in PowerSchool and as the date first enrolled when completing the demographics page of the ACCESS for ELLs English Proficiency Test.

2) Include the LEA's **methods for identifying, placing, and assessing** the students to be included in the English language instruction educational program. The following components must be evident in the plan.

- Home Language Survey
- WIDA Online Screener
- WIDA-ACCESSS Placement Test for Kindergarten
- WIDA Measure of Developing English Language (MODEL) for Kindergarten
- ACCESS for ELLs 2.0

IDENTIFICATION, ENROLLMENT, AND SCREENING PROCEDURES

A. BLOUNT COUNTY SCHOOLS ESL FLOW CHART



B. HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY (HLS)

English learners (ELs) **must** be identified at the point of enrollment. Blount County Schools use the Home Language Survey (HLS) to identify language minority students and facilitate their entry into the new school environment. A language minority student is one whose home language is other than English. BCS has trained school personnel dedicated to meeting the needs of students from different cultures with different levels of English proficiency.

A Home Language Survey (HLS) **is completed** and entered in PowerSchool for each student registering for enrollment in a BCS school. **We find it beneficial to interview the student and/or parents during enrollment.** Information such as limited or interrupted formal education, emotional trauma, cultural awareness, and other special circumstances will support the EL committee's decisions when considering the development of the individual English language plan for the student. An interpreter or translator may be required to complete the interview and survey. The completed survey becomes part of the student's permanent record and should be available for future reference.

The Home Language Survey contains the following questions:

1. Was your child born in the United States?
   (i.e., State, Country of Origin)
2. Has your child attended any school in the United States for any three years during their lifetime?
   (i.e., School, State, Start Date, End Date)
3. What language is spoken by you and your family most of the time?
   (i.e., Home language)
4. Do you require written translation or oral interpretation of district-level and school-level communications?
5. Is your child's native language anything other than English?
   (i.e., Native Language)
6. What is the language the Student first acquired?
   (i.e., Acquired Language)

When all responses on the HLS indicate that English is the only language used by the student and by individuals in the home, the student is considered an English-only speaker. BCS follows ordinary procedures for placement in the general student population. If any response on the HLS indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home, the guidance counselor or person registering the student must send a copy of the registration form, and the HLS to the EL teacher.The EL teacher will conduct further assessment to determine the student's English language proficiency level. However, the presence of a language other than English does not automatically signify that the student is not a proficient speaker of English.

BCS enrollment personnel are trained on the importance of using forms in a language that parents and/or guardians understand. Translators and MasterWord are also utilized to interview the parent and during the enrollment process to ensure that non-English-speaking caregivers understand all aspects of the enrollment process and the intent and purpose of the Home Language Survey. Thorough training of essential enrollment personnel and using translated documents and forms minimizes the risk of misidentifying students as potential English learners and/or erroneously screening students for English proficiency.

C. ENROLLMENT

As stated in the BCS Policy and Procedures Manual, Section 5.1, all language minority, immigrant, and migrant students must be allowed to attend school regardless of their ability to produce a birth certificate, a social security number, immunization records, or immigration documentation (*Plyer v. Doe*). Application forms to obtain social security numbers may be distributed, but the parents are left with the option of completing the forms.

If parents do not have student immunization records available, the dates of immunization may be obtained by calling the previous school the child attended. If necessary, students can begin the immunization series at the local public health department.

Enrollment Support: Translation and Interpretation Services

Blount County Schools (BCS) is committed to ensuring that all families receive information in a language they can understand. We provide translation and interpretation services to facilitate meaningful communication between school personnel and parents/guardians of English learners and others with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Our school district employs a bilingual Home-School Liaison and EL Program Support Aide who supports both verbal and written translations for families as needed. These individuals are based at the Professional Development Center (PDC) and can be reached at 205-775-2090 EXT 8202. The phone line includes a bilingual answering service available 24 hours a day to ensure accessible communication.

The BCS district website is equipped with built-in translation features to support users in accessing information in their preferred language. Additionally, we intentionally avoid posting important updates in PDF format on social media platforms, so the content remains easily translatable and accessible to families using mobile devices and browser-based translation tools.

To support document translation, BCS uses the TransAct Parent Notices platform (https://www.transact.com/), which provides legally compliant forms and communication templates in multiple languages.

BCS recognizes that even if a student does not qualify as an English learner, their parents/guardians may still have limited English proficiency in one or more domains (listening, speaking, reading, or writing). To ensure equitable access to all programs and services, BCS uses the Home Language Survey and parent interviews to identify language support needs and provide appropriate accommodations.

D. WIDA SCREENER PLACEMENT TEST

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online are assessment tools, known as "screeners", and are used by educators to measure the English language proficiency of students who have recently arrived in the U.S. or in a particular district. It can help to determine whether a child needs English language instructional services, and if so, at what level.

- Alabama is a member of the WIDA consortium and has adopted the WIDA Screener Online to determine eligibility for placement for students in grades 1-12, and the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten for students in kindergarten and first semester 1st graders. The screeners assist in facilitating appropriate instructional and program placement decisions.
- **WIDA Screener for Kindergarten** is used for students in Pre-K4 through the first semester of Grade 1. In this context, Pre-K4 refers to the spring or summer prior to Kindergarten enrollment when children

are participating in the registration and screening process for kindergarten entrance for the first time. Students are screened to determine language proficiency in the listening and speaking domains.

- **WIDA Screener Online** is used for students in the second semester of Grades 1 through Grade 12. The WIDA Screener Online assesses English language proficiency in all four domains of language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Language minority students identified through the HLS during registration at the **beginning of the school year** must be assessed for English language proficiency and placed within thirty **(30) days** of enrollment. If a student enrolls **during the school year** and is **a first-time enrollee in a U.S. school**, the EL Committee **also has thirty (30) days** to screen and notify parents of placement. Language minority students who register **after the beginning of the school year** and are not new to the U.S., must be assessed and placed within **ten (10) school day**s of enrollment.
- Current ACCESS Scores will be used for students having transferred from any of the WIDA Consortium States.
- Any student with yes on their Home Language Survey and no previous ACCESS or WIDA Screener score will be screened with the WIDA Screener for K-12.
- BCS's EL teachers are qualified to administer the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, the WIDA Screener Online, and the ACCESS for ELs. Each EL teacher completes all applicable WIDA Training Modules at the beginning of each school year and is trained in test security twice yearly with the system's Testing Coordinator. BCS follows the guidelines in the Student Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners (2025-2026).
- The WIDA Screener yields an overall composite score based on the four language domains tested. The following guidelines must be adhered to in determining eligibility for placement in the English language instruction educational program:
    - Any Kindergarten student or 1st semester, 1st-grade student scoring **below 4.5** on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten will be identified as limited English proficient and **will require placement** in an English language program. Students scoring **4.5 or above will not qualify** for the Title III Supplemental EL Program as allowed by the ALSDE guidelines.
    - Any student scoring an overall composite score of **5.0*** or above on the WIDA Screener **will not qualify** as an English Learner and will be identified as a **NOMPHLOTE**. This student **will not** be placed in the Title III Supplemental EL Program as allowed by the ALSDE guidelines.

The WIDA Screeners and the ACCESS for ELLs measure speaking, listening, reading, and writing across the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language in 1st through Grade 12 and the W-APT for Kindergarten. The WIDA English Language Development (ELD Standards are available at: https://wida.wisc.edu/).

The WIDA Screeners for Kindergarten - Grade 12 and ACCESS for ELLS will be administered in grade level clusters as follows:

Kindergarten Screener
Grade 1
Grades 2-3
Grades 4-5
Grades 6-8
Grades 9-12

The WIDA Screeners for Kindergarten - Grade 12 are administered on an individual basis after a student has been initially identified as a potential EL student with the HLS upon enrollment. The score from the WIDA Screener facilitates the IELP Committee's discussion and decision as to whether a student receives EL services because the WIDA Screener indicates the student's language proficiency level.
The ACCESS for ELLs is administered each year in accordance with the testing calendar set forth by the Alabama State Department of Education. All Kindergarten students are assessed individually.

QUALIFYING SCORES FOR POTENTIAL ELs

WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN or *WIDA SCREENER ONLINE*

WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN			
GRADE	**REQUIRED DOMAINS**	**QUALIFIES STUDENT AS EL**	**DOES NOT QUALIFY STUDENT AS EL**
Pre-K4 Pre-registration period for kindergarten entry through 1st semester of Grade 1	Listening, Speaking	Less than 4.5 Oral Language Score	4.5 or higher Oral Language Score
WIDA SCREENER ONLINE			
GRADE	**REQUIRED DOMAINS**	**QUALIFIES STUDENT AS EL**	**DOES NOT QUALIFY STUDENT AS EL**
2nd semester of Grade 1 through Grade 12	Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking	Less than 5.0	5.0 or higher

Additional Information/Notes:

- In cases where students score too high and do not qualify for services (NOMPHLOTE) but are experiencing difficulty with language in the classroom, it may be necessary to reassess the student. It is permissible to readminister the initial screener to the student, with the parent/guardian(s) permission, in order to determine if the student does qualify to receive services.
- If a student scores a 4.0 or below on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, they will be exempt from AlaKids and marked as "Not Observed." See AlaKiDS – Early Childhood Education (alabama.gov)
- **Misidentification on an EL**: If it is suspected that a student has been inaccurately identified as an EL, first contact the EL Consulting Teacher, Denise Lybrand via email at dlybrand@blountboe.net or by phone at 205-775-2090 for guidance.

E. (IELP) INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH LANGUGE PLAN AND PROCEDURES

Each student designated as EL has an Individualized English Language Plan (I-ELP) which is updated annually until the student achieves Former EL (FEL) status.

I-ELPs and ELLevation

1. Blount County Schools completes all I-ELPs in the *ELLevation* Platform.
2. *ELLevation* is used to track student progress over time, generate reports, monitor students, plan for instruction, and collaborate with colleagues.
3. I-ELPs in ELLevation are required to include the following items:
    a. Student demographics information
    b. Most Recent Test Results (May include the following - Kindergarten screener, WIDA Online Screener, and/or ACCESS scores)
    c. WIDA Can Do Indicators
    d. EL Services and Programs
    e. State Testing Accommodations

f. Instructional Accommodations
   NOTE: Instructional accommodations are recommended for use during regular classroom instruction, assignments, and assessments. They should be on proficiency levels and individual student needs.
g. Language Goals

BCS will refer to the S***tudent Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners 2025-2026*** for additional information and requirements on State Testing Accommodations for I-ELPs.

Instructional Accommodations
Instructional accommodations and supports should occur as part of Tier I classroom instruction, classroom assignments, and classroom assessments. They should be flexible and responsive to student needs. These may be updated as needed to reflect the needs of the student. It is good practice to reconvene with the EL Committee to discuss necessary adjustments and document when changes are made.

When determining appropriate instructional accommodations and supports, data should be considered from a variety of sources. Teacher input, academic performance, and historical assessment data from ACCESS for ELs and other assessment sources may be considered. Accommodations should be selected that help reduce the language barrier and provide the student with access to content area instruction. Care should be taken to ensure that high quality instruction and assessment practices are implemented and that the appropriate level of support needed by the student is determined to avoid over or under-accommodation.

F. EL COMMITTEE PLACEMENT

The goal of students who are ELs is that they attain fluency in English, master the state's academic content standards as demonstrated by proficiency on the state's required student assessments, and pass any other current state required tests.

At the high school level, credits should be awarded based on transcripts provided by the students/parents, even if the coursework was taken in another country. **If transcripts are in a language other than English, translations should be sought so that credits can be awarded. Schools may request the translation of students' transcripts or other enrollments by contacting their EL Regional Specialist.**

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses
English learners are eligible to participate in advanced placement courses; however, according to the College Board Advanced Placement Program, accommodations for ELs are not permitted on AP Exams. Please note that ELs enrolled in AP courses should receive classroom accommodations so that they have access to content. It is important that this information is shared with parents and students.

G. FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS
The District will provide a HLS to any foreign exchange student who enrolls in school. If the foreign exchange student has a language other than English identified on the HLS, the foreign exchange student will be administered the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten or WIDA Screener Online.
There are no special exceptions for Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who are English learners for the purposes of English Language Proficiency assessments if they attend a school in the United States. Foreign Exchange, or F-1 Visa students, who qualify as English learners must receive ESL services, and, if applicable, Title III supplemental services.

Foreign Exchange students **are included in the State's immigrant count** for Title III funding purposes:
• If the Foreign Exchange student is also an English learner, s/he would be included in an LEA's count of EL students for the Title III formula subgrant.
• If the Foreign Exchange student meets the definition of "immigrant" student under section 3201(5) of ESEA, s/he would also be included in an LEA's count of immigrant children and youth.
• If the Foreign Exchange student qualifies as an English learner, they must participate in the Title I required assessments, including the ELP assessment WIDA® ACCESS for ELLs. Foreign exchange students will also participate on any of the state's content assessments.

ANNUAL ACCESS TESTING

A. ACCESS FOR ELLS and WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS

ACCESS for ELLs stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. This large-scale test addresses the academic English language development (ELD) standards at the core of the WIDA Consortium's approach to instructing and evaluating the progress of English language learners.

In order for Blount County Schools to determine if ELs are progressing toward the attainment of the English language, ACCESS for ELLs and WIDA Alternate ACCESS are administered annually to all EL students in Grades K-12, including those whose parents/guardians have waived services. It is a standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test that assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within the school context across the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students who have attained English language proficiency and are coded as FEL-1, FEL-2, FEL-3, FEL-4, or FEL WILL NOT take either of these assessments.

The EL Committee will determine whether the WIDA Alternate ACCESS is the best assessment for an English learner to demonstrate their understanding of English. The EL student must meet the definition of an English Learner with Significant Cognitive Disabilities as well as additional State requirements for the administration of the WIDA Alternate ACCESS. BCS's Testing Coordinator guides our EL teachers on this policy.

Blount County Schools refer to the Student Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners (2024-2025) for additional guidance related to the ACCESS for ELLs and WIDA Alternate ACCESS as well as the required WIDA Alternate ACCESS Student Verification and Approval form.

B. ACCESS For ELLs OVERVIEW TIERS

ACCESS for ELLs Online is semi-adaptive, meaning the test platform tracks student progress in the Listening and Reading tests and presents test items based on students' previous performance. When students finish the Listening and Reading tests, the test platform evaluates their performance to assign them to the appropriate tier of the Speaking and Writing tests. Students are placed into one of three tiers for Speaking (Pre-A, A, or B/C) and one of two tiers for Writing (A or B/C). Students then complete all tasks in the non-adaptive Speaking and Writing domain tests.

WIDA recommends students take the Listening test first, followed by the Reading test. However, Listening and Reading can be administered in either order, followed by Speaking and Writing in either order.

Refer to the ***Student Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners (2025-2026***) for additional guidance related to ACCESS for ELLs Online tiers.

C. WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS

WIDA Alternate ACCESS will replace the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs in 2024. The assessment remains a paper-based test that is individually administered and designed specifically for those EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who, due to their disabilities, would be unable to meaningfully participate on the ACCESS for ELLs EL Guidebook Office of Student Learning – Instructional Services and Federal Programs Sections 23 2023-2024 assessment. WIDA Alternate ACCESS meets the U.S. Federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), for monitoring and reporting ELs' progress toward English language proficiency. EL students will be tested on the same four domains as students participating on ACCESS for ELLs – Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. Test scores can be used to guide instruction and monitor progress. All domains are scored by the Test Administrator.

WIDA Alternate ACCESS score reports provide score information for eight categories: four domains and four composite scores (Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, Overall WIDA Alternate ACCESS scores have many potential uses, from determining the placement of individual students to guiding instruction. Test scores can be used to:

A. Monitor student progress annually (using scores from two years or more)
B. Guide IEP teams in making determinations about the types of language acquisition supports the student needs
C. Inform classroom instruction
D. Guide the decision-making process

Note: ALSDE approval is required for any student to take the *WIDA Alternate ACCESS* assessment. Districts who administer this assessment without ALSDE approval will be required to pay for the cost of the test, and the students' scores will be invalidated.

D. ALTERNATE PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors (Alternate PLDs) have changed. The Alternate PLDs are an extension of the PLDs found in the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards, 2020 Edition, and describe the continuum of language development for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Alternate PLDs are organized into five levels of English language proficiency for two communication modes: Interpretive and Expressive. These Alternate PLDs are unique to WIDA Alternate ACCESS.

3) Include the **method and procedures for exiting students from the English language Instruction Educational program (LIEP) and for monitoring their progress** for a period of at least four years (new in ESSA),, and at a minimum, follow SDE exiting requirements for ELs. All school personnel should be aware of the State established exit criteria of a composite score of 4.8 on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 English language proficiency test.

EXITING PROCEDURES

A. EXIT CRITERIA for ACCESS for ELLs

Alabama has determined that EL students who achieve a 4.8 composite score on ACCESS for ELLs are considered to be English language proficient. These students will exit the program and will no longer receive English language support services. At such time, an EL student has exited, the student will be classified as an FEL-1 and will be monitored for four years.

Students who have exited may continue to receive the same EL accommodations on state assessments as they did while they were classified as an EL1 or EL2. FELs may receive any of the allowable accommodations on the state assessments as long as they are used regularly in the classroom and are written into an I-ELP for the student. At the end of the four-year monitoring period, the student will no longer receive EL accommodations.

Each classroom has the ESL Flow Chart and EL Reference Chart posted in their classroom to ensure that everyone is aware of the BCS exiting procedures.

TRANSITION FROM EL PROGRAM SERVICES

EL students who make an overall proficiency level of **4.8** on *ACCESS for ELLs* will exit the EL program. If a student does not make an overall proficiency score of 4.8 they will continue receiving English language services.

Students who make the required score to exit from ESL services are placed on monitoring status for **four** academic years. EL stakeholders and teachers must communicate regularly during the monitoring phase. ***It is recommended that EL stakeholders and teachers communicate at least once each nine weeks during the first year and at least once each semester during consecutive years with documentation to ensure that the exited student is functioning successfully in the mainstream classroom.*** Students are classified as Former English Learners Monitoring Years 1-4 (**FEL-1-4**) during this monitoring period. Upon successful completion of four years of monitoring, ELs are classified Former English Learner (**FEL**) and are no longer included in the EL subgroup for accountability purposes.

B. ALTERNATE EXIT CRITERIA FOR WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS

WIDA ALTERNATE ACCESS assessment is new. Cut Scores have not yet been established. When established, these scores will be added to this Board approved document.

C. MONITORING PROCEDURES FOR EXITED ELs, (FELs)

Students are classified as Former English Learner Year 1 (/FEL-1) during their first year of monitoring, Former English Learner Year 2 (/FEL-2)) during their second year of monitoring, Former English Learner Monitoring Year 3 (/FEL-3) during their third year of monitoring, and Former English Learner Monitoring Year 4 (FEL-4) during their fourth year of monitoring. Upon successful completion of four years of monitoring, ELs are classified as Former English Learners (FEL) and no longer included in the LEP/EL subgroup for school-level EL accountability or program evaluation purposes.

The following are the IELP Committee's Recommendations for FEL-1-4 status students:

- The student has completed the Exit Testing Criteria for the Title III Supplemental EL Program. (ACCESS Score of 4.8)
- The student will be monitored for four consecutive years.
- FEL 1-4 students are also monitored in ELLevation. BCS sends the ALSDE FEL Monitoring template to core classroom teachers at least 4 times per school year.
- The EL teacher will monitor mid-term grades and report cards.
- Content Area Teacher(s) will notify the EL Teacher if the student is struggling in the classroom. Collaboration among mainstream teachers and the EL teacher is ongoing.
- If the FEL-1-4 student is in danger of failing, the student in question will go through RTI procedures. If the PST decides that the student is at risk due to a language proficiency issue, then the IELP Committee will meet to review the data and determine if new English language placement testing is recommended. The WIDA Screener will be administered on the correct level, and the IELP Committee will recommend reentry into the Title III Supplemental EL Program if indicated. If the student scores proficient on the WIDA Screener, the IELP Committee can recommend further alternative evaluation(s) be pursued by the PST.
- EL teachers in BCS maintain FEL Teacher Notebooks, which include sections for each FEL-1-4 student under monitoring. The teacher files all pertinent information within the notebooks, such as Title III Supplemental EL and Core Program exiting papers, progress reports, report cards, parent notes, emails, conference forms, etc. A review of any student's pertinent papers in this notebook will reveal academic, social, and/or cultural progress or lack thereof. These notebooks are maintained and filed at the end of the academic year for documentation purposes. The information in the notebooks is also easily accessible and available for review in parent conferences, data meetings, walk-throughs, grade-level meetings, and departmental meetings.

C. PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTION
1) Describe the programs and activities that will be **developed, implemented, and administered to ensure** that ELs acquire academic language as part of the core LIEP (English Language Instruction Educational Program). ● Process the system uses to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment ● Rationale for selecting the particular EL program/s and how they are evidence-based

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Successful EL Programs enable EL students to attain both English proficiency and parity of participation in the standard instructional program within a reasonable period of time.

- A Comprehensive Needs Assessment Evaluation is conducted annually.

- Results from this assessment, evaluations, ACCESS Test data, and mandated state assessments serve to evaluate, select, and implement core and supplemental programs.
- This assessment allows us to set data-driven goals and strategies for meeting those goals.
- BCS collects longitudinal data to monitor and compare the performance of current ELs, former ELs, and never-ELs in our standard instructional program.

B. IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION

a. Core English Language Instruction Educational Program

- Content area and special program teachers accommodate instruction to meet individual EL needs.
- Academic accommodations training provided to classroom teachers in strategies for accommodating occurs periodically in large groups and ongoing between the EL staff and regular education teacher collaboration on a daily/weekly basis. All teachers receive **Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English Strategies (SDAIE)** training each school year as part of our ongoing, sustained professional development.
- EL teachers and Core teachers collaborate regularly concerning each EL student's needs.
- Regular education teachers with an EL/LEP student have access to ELLevation. In ELLevation, core teachers can view a complete IEP, Classroom Accommodations, Testing Accommodations, Can-Do Descriptors, and Goals for each student.
- Core Teachers of ELs have access to ELLevations Strategies Professional Learning, Pathways, Modules, Activities, and Collections to better meet the needs of their students in the classroom.
- Many strategies and tools appropriate for ELs overlap with other instructional programs and training provided for all regular education teachers and students, such as Orton-Gillingham, LETRs, ARI, AMSTI, and Strategic Teaching.

i. Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) SDAIE was developed to meet the needs of students with limited academic English skills, many of whom struggle to process verbal clues (spoken and written) without extra support. (Other terms for SDAIE are: Structured English Immersion, Content-based ELD, and Sheltered Instruction.)

SDAIE demands a high amount of each of the following:

- **Teacher communication behaviors** - Gestures, expressions, synonyms, restating, intonation, articulation, rate of speech
- **Modeling -** Students need to see and hear many examples of modeled language, work, and behavior that exhibits target learning.
- **Scaffolding -** Teachers must gradually release responsibility for performance of target learning while supporting students as they assume responsibility and become independent at the task.
- **Visuals and objects-** Visuals, photos, videos, objects, etc., can "paint a thousand words" and make the verbal/written academic language ten times more comprehensible.
- **Building up and Connecting to Background Knowledge** - Students need high amounts of pre-reading preparation, particularly with texts that include vocabulary, concepts, and themes to which they have not had much exposure.
- **Authentic Assessment** - Teachers need to frequently check to ensure students comprehend and provide feedback so they can make changes. (Thumbs up, quick writes, etc.)
- **Differentiated Instruction** - Teachers create ways to support different levels of language and learning within the same classroom.

- **Using movement and multiple intelligences** - Teachers incorporate into their lessons various strategies that use movement, drama, music, art, and other intelligences to reinforce learning of content concepts and academic language.
- **Cooperative Learning** - Students need to process and practice the language and concepts in order to own them. Pair and group work provides a format for communication and constructivist learning to happen.
- **Building habits** of reading and comprehension, academic thinking, test-taking, and studying - Students need to practice and acquire habits that good readers and students use automatically for success in various types of reading, studying, and assessments (Marzano, 2001).

2) Describe how language instruction educational programs will **ensure** that ELs develop English proficiency.

- How data is used to improve the rate of language acquisition for ELs
- How the LEA supports each school with respect to continuous improvement practices and specific professional development
- How World-class Instruction Design and Assessment English language proficiency (WIDA ELP) standards are integrated into the curriculum

EL CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS

A. USING DATA to IMPROVE the RATE of LANGUAGE ACQUISITION for ELs

Blount County Schools (BCS) utilizes a continuous data-informed approach to improve outcomes for English learners. Key data sources include:

- **WIDA Screener** and **ACCESS for ELLs 2.0** proficiency scores
- **Individual English Learner Plan (IELP)** documentation
- **Classroom performance and benchmark assessments**
- **ELLevation platform** for tracking student progress, accommodations, and instructional goals

EL teachers maintain an IELP Teacher Notebook, which includes ACCESS score reports, accommodations checklists, and academic progress data. This documentation is reviewed regularly to ensure appropriate instructional adjustments and language acquisition progress.

The ELLevation platform allows both EL and general education teachers to access and analyze student data, including Can-Do Descriptors, IELP goals, classroom/testing accommodations, and historical performance. This facilitates informed instruction, ensures compliance, and promotes shared responsibility for student growth.

The district reviews aggregate and individual student data annually to:

- Adjust instructional models (push-in, pull-out, co-teaching)
- Determine needed supports at the school level
- Set professional development priorities

- Identify trends and areas for improvement in EL achievement and proficiency growth

B. LEA SUPPORT for CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The LEA provides ongoing, targeted support to schools to ensure high-quality instruction and continuous improvement for English learners. Support includes:

- **Annual professional development** for all educators on the EL Plan, SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) strategies, ELLevation tools, and differentiation based on language proficiency levels
- **Ongoing training on the integration of WIDA ELD standards** into core content areas, with a focus on lesson planning, assessment alignment, and scaffolding
- **Access to ELLevation's professional learning modules**, Pathways, and Collections for self-paced and job-embedded learning aligned to the needs of ELs
- **School-level coaching and technical assistance** from the EL Coordinator and district-level instructional staff
- **Collaboration between EL and general education teachers** through data meetings, IELP conferences, and instructional planning sessions
- **Support for the use of scientifically research-based instructional resources** in both core and supplemental EL programming

This systemic support ensures that all students, including ELs, have access to rigorous instruction and interventions tailored to their needs.

C. INTEGRATION of WIDA ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (ELP) STANDARDS

BCS integrates the **WIDA ELD Standards** across all content areas and instructional settings. Instructional resources are reviewed for effectiveness based on student progress, ACCESS for ELLs data, and teacher feedback. Materials are updated or supplemented as needed to ensure alignment with current best practices in language acquisition and content learning.

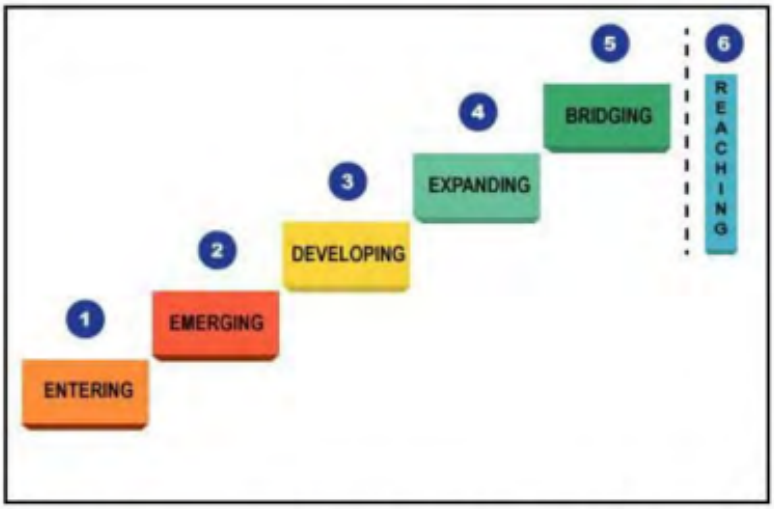


***Figure 1*. The language proficiency levels of the WIDA ELD Standards.**

a. **WIDA English Language Standards**
   - **Standard 1 – Social and Instructional Language**
     English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.
   - **Standard 2 – Language of Language Arts**
     English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts.
   - **Standard 3 – Language of Mathematics**
     English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of mathematics.
   - **Standard 4 – Language of Science**
     English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of science.
   - **Standard 5 – Language of Social Studies**
     English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of social studies.

By implementing the WIDA ELD standards in the classroom, teachers can provide ELs with meaningful access to local curriculum as they progress through the stages of language acquisition. **ELLevation supports teachers in integrating the WIDA Standards by providing Pathways, Modules, Activities, and Collections.**

WIDA PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (GRADES 1-12)

LISTENING

LEVEL	STUDENTS AT THIS LEVEL GENERALLY CAN…
6	understand oral language in English and participate in all academic classes, for example: • Synthesize information from multiple speakers • Recognize language that conveys information with precision and accuracy • Create models or visuals to represent detailed information presented orally • Identify strengths and limitations of different points of view
5	understand oral language in English and participate in all academic classes, for example: • Expand on others' ideas • Distinguish events, people, or situations from oral descriptions • Recall key information and details about processes or concepts discussed orally • Identify examples ad reasons that support an opinion or viewpoint
4	understand oral language in English related to specific topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Exchange information and ideas with others • Connect people and events based on oral information • Apply key information about processes or concepts presented orally • Identify positions or points of view on issues in oral discussions
3	understand oral language related to specific common topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Connect spoken ideas to own experiences • Find, select, and order information from oral descriptions • Identify the causes and effects of events or situations discussed orally • Classify pros and cons of issues in discussions
2	understand oral language related to specific familiar topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Identify main topics in discussions • Categorize or sequence information presented orally using pictures or objects • Follow short oral directions with the help of pictures • Sort facts and opinions stated orally
1	understand oral messages that include visuals and gestures and may contain a few everyday words or phrases in English, for example: • Recognize familiar words and phrases in conversations • Match information from oral descriptions to objects, figures, or illustrations • Follow one-step oral directions • Show agreement or disagreement with oral statements

Source: ***WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE FOR SCORE REPORTS***

WIDA PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (GRADES 1-12)

SPEAKING

LEVEL	STUDENTS AT THIS LEVEL GENERALLY CAN…
6	use English to communicate orally and participate in all academic classes, for example: • React and respond to multiple points of view • Organize and present research-based information • Clarify how or why something happens • Persuade others based on opinions, examples, and reasons
5	use English to communicate orally and participate in all academic classes, for example: • Discuss the causes and impact of events • Summarize and relate information • Present and justify ideas showing how or why • Express and defend opinions backed by examples and reasons
4	communicate orally in English using language related to specific topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Compare stories, issues, and concepts • Paraphrase and summarize information • State ideas to show how or why with examples • Give opinions supported by detailed reasons
3	communicate ideas and information orally in English using several connected sentences and can participate in short conversations and discussions in school, for example: • Relate stories or events • Share ideas and provide details • Describe processes or procedures • Give opinions with reasons
2	communicate ideas and details orally in English using language that contains short sentences and everyday words and phrases, for example: • Share about what, when, or where something happened • Compare objects, people, pictures, and events • Describe steps in cycles or processes • Express opinions
1	communicate orally in English using gestures and language that may contain a few words, for example: • Ask and answer simple questions about what, when, or where something happened • Name familiar objects, people, and pictures • Show how to solve problems using words and gestures • Express personal experiences

Source: ***WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE FOR SCORE REPORTS***

WIDA PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (GRADES 1-12)

READING

LEVEL	STUDENTS AT THIS LEVEL GENERALLY CAN…
6	understand written language in English from all academic classes, for example: • Evaluate written information from various sources of information • Conduct research and synthesize information from multiple sources • Distinguish various processes based on details in written texts • Recognize different ideas, claims, and evidence about a variety of issues
5	understand written language in English from all academic classes, for example: • Summarize information on a variety of topics and for a variety of purposes • Compare ideas and information across various texts • Identify causes, effects, and consequences of events from written information • Recognize claims and supporting evidence around specific issues or concepts
4	Understand written language related to specific topics in school, for example: • Distinguish viewpoints and justifications described in editorials and other written texts • Identify main ideas and details in informational and fictional texts • Recognize biases and diverse perspectives in written text • Connect claims, evidence, and examples in a variety of written sources
3	understand written language related to common topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Classify main ideas and examples in written information • Identify main information that tells who, what, when, or where something happened • Identify steps in written processes and procedures • Recognize language related to claims and supporting evidence
2	understand written language related to specific familiar topics in school and can participate in class discussions, for example: • Identify main ideas in written information • Identify main actors and events in stories and simple texts with pictures or graphs • Sequence pictures, events, or steps in processes • Distinguish between claim and evidence statements
1	understand written texts that include visuals and may contain a few words or phrases in English, for example: • Interpret information from graphics, charts, and other visual information • Comprehend short text with illustrations and simple and familiar language • Identify steps in processes presented in graphs or short texts with illustrations • Identify words and phrases that express opinions and claims

Source: ***WIDA ACCESS FOR ELLS INTERPRETIVE GUIDE FOR SCORE REPORTS***

b. Core Instruction and Intervention Curriculum and Resources:
Into Reading (SRB) K-6
Orton-Gillingham inspired instruction (SRB) K-3
Instruction based on LETRS, Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (SRB) K-3
Heggerty for Phonemic awareness (SRB) K-3
SPIRE (SRB) K-8
Edmentum (SRB) K-12
Envision for Math (SRB) K-5, 9-12
Reveal Math McGraw-Hill 6-8 (SRB)

3) Describe the **grading and retention** policy and procedures. NOTE: ELs cannot fail or be retained if language is the barrier.

GRADING AND RETENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ELS

A. GRADING

Grading of ELs should be based on students' level of English proficiency. The teacher ensures the continual use of high-quality instruction and assessment as well as instructional and assessment accommodations in accordance with the student's I-ELP. This complies with the federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act of (ESSA). Appropriate instruction and differentiation must be adjusted according to language proficiency level to appropriately accommodate the student. Documentation of these components (lesson plans, work samples, and ongoing assessments) should be maintained by the classroom teacher.

B. RETENTION

- Retention of ELs shall not be based upon the level of English language proficiency (Section I, Part G, and Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of Lau v. Nichols). Lack of ability to read and write in English cannot be the basis for an "F." **It is against the law to fail a student because he/she is not proficient in English.**

- A grade of "F" cannot be assigned to an EL student without full documentation of accommodations having been made to assure the student full access to the content of the academic program.

- The opportunity is given to earn credits toward graduation for 9th through 12th-grade students. Student grades reflect work done with accommodations and are noted in the IELP Student Folder for each class. CREDIT RECOVERY is available for all students needing to make up graduation credits

- Traditional procedures for assigning grades to students may not be appropriate for ELs at the lowest proficiency level. The same methods and criteria applied to their English-speaking age and/or grade level peers should not be the same as to assess students who lack English language proficiency.

- Teachers are encouraged to maintain high expectations for student learning and are to accommodate and adapt lessons and assignments so that ELs can progress in the content and second language acquisition. Accommodated assessments help ELs demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Prior to considering retention of an EL, the following points should be addressed by the IELP Committee.

- the student's level of English language proficiency

- Have IELP Plan and IELP Student Folder(s) been implemented and reviewed regularly to document classroom accommodations and student progress?
- Ensure meaningful participation, **are classroom accommodations being made** through:
    - teacher lesson delivery?
    - activities and assignments?
    - homework?
    - formal and informal assessments (e.g., quizzes and tests)?
- Amount of daily individual English language development instruction is received by learners?
- Has an alternate grading strategy been implemented
    - portfolio, checklist, teacher observation, rubric assessment on content and language objectives
- Has the classroom teacher been adequately trained (SDAIE)
- **Do the teachers note accommodations on homework, class assignments, and tests?**
- Do the report cards indicate that students were graded according to their I-ELPs?

<u>Teachers follow these guidelines:</u>

- **ELs must receive accommodation of content work when needed.**
- Base grading of accommodated work upon individual needs.
- **The lack of English language proficiency cannot be the basis for an EL receiving an "F.**
- Assign an achievement grade to students demonstrating knowledge and skills in a particular subject (i.e., math).

a. Retention Guideline Chart for ELs

Retention Guidelines Chart for English Learners

Consider Retention In consultation with ESL committee members, retention **can be** considered if **all** points have been addressed and the student still is not successful.	YES ←	English Proficiency Level ✚	NO →	**Do Not Retain** Student should **not** be retained if **all** points have not been addressed.
		Full Implementation of I-ELP ✚	NO →	
		Full Implementation of Accommodations ✚	NO →	
		Amount of English Language Development Instruction ✚	NO →	
		Alternate Grading Strategy ✚	NO →	
		Classroom Teacher PD ✚	NO →	
		Graded according to I-ELPs	NO →	

DRAFT

4) Include details on the **specific staffing and other resources** to be provided to English learners under the LIEP in the district. ESL staff should be qualified with academic preparation in English-as-a-second-language,e.g. as documented in the 1991 Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Memorandum.

- Qualified personnel (ESL licensure)
- ESL staff development
- Content teacher and administrator staff development

STAFFING

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

The number of staff employed in the district in the ESL Program will be based on multiple criteria: (a) the number of ELs, (b) the level of English proficiency of the ELs, (c) the achievement level of the students, (d) the grade level of the students, and (e) other programs in effect at the individual schools. The LEA places all state funded EL positions across all seven (7) school communities and then supplements these positions to provide additional pull-out and push-in services according to needs. Additional supplemental personnel is placed by EL population (e.g., bi-lingual aides and paraprofessionals).

All teachers in BCS are fluent in English and have written and oral communication skills. English fluency is considered established if personnel have a teaching certificate issued by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and have met the highly qualified status of a teacher or instructional aide required by the ALSDE.

This ALSDE certification assessment process and the BCS employment interview process certify that all BCS certified teachers employed are fluent in all four language domains of English.

Recruitment of certified teachers with ESL licensure is a priority. EL paraprofessionals, when in place, are also highly qualified.

The EL staff is responsible for screening students, supporting ACCESS testing, monitoring student progression, collaborating with core classroom teachers, supporting the training of EL core instruction, and serving as a bridge between school and home by keeping parents informed on school and academic issues making use of translation services provided by the LEA.

All ELs will receive their primary, core education from certified teachers through the mandatory Core academic program. The priority of the EL class is supplemental English language instruction. Other class support and tutoring are addressed based on the student's needs.

B. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is provided to all ESL staff, content teachers, and administrators.

Regular content area program teachers receive training in the instruction of second language learners through workshops, conferences, and/or contracted consultants. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with EL staff concerning appropriate accommodations for all EL students on an ongoing basis. EL teachers review ACCESS Test scores, state-mandated test scores, WIDA ELP Standards, accommodations, monitoring procedures, and IELP Plans for each individual EL student with each regular education and special program teacher of EL students annually and more often as needed.

Classroom teachers receive training on the use of ELLevation in the classroom. ELLevation provides the data needed to make informed instructional decisions. Through Pathways' strategies and activities, they offer resources to help classroom teachers effectively differentiate instruction for ELs, and prepare ELs to access rigorous, grade level content. Teachers work with EL teachers to complete Professional Development Modules and are encouraged to continue completing Modules on their own. Teachers receive 3.5 ALSDE clock hours for each completed Module.

Ongoing, sustained EL professional development focusing on SDAIE / WIDA instructional strategies and tools for supporting organizational and visual scaffolding continues to be implemented at the district and school levels. Student achievement improvement on the ACAP Reading for LEP/EL subgroup is one goal of this training. The training focuses on the use of graphic organizers, visuals, and color-coding to teach key concepts and key vocabulary in the content areas. The content teachers will utilize these tools, and the EL staff will supplement language instruction by teaching specifically related skills to ELs in small group and/or one-on-one settings. For example, ELs must use organizational skills and tools to complete the Writing Section of the ACCESS Test by focusing on key concepts and key vocabulary. This instruction and training will aid ELs in content classes and on state-mandated testing as they acquire more detailed language knowledge and complete demanding academic language tasks.

Additional professional development opportunities and training occur to address specific areas of need as required. Opportunities to view relevant videos, attend related workshops, conferences, and/or through contracted consultants provide professional development opportunities.

5) Describe how the LEA will **collect and submit data** in accordance with SDE requirements.

- How schools are trained to use the state system/database to code ELs and enter reliable and accurate data

STATE CODES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS AND DATA COLLECTION

Upon identification and placement, students are given a code in PowerSchool. The ELs demographics page in PowerSchool is marked accordingly by the PowerSchool Manager. In addition, the EL Consulting Teacher must also mark the English as a Second Language box for ELs. The PowerSchool Manager, the system EL Consulting Teacher and the EL Teacher work closely to ensure this information is correctly marked regularly. An EL Enrollment Form is completed by each EL teacher when a new student enrolls or when a student's status changes. This form is signed by the EL Teacher and then submitted to the EL Consulting Teacher and EL Home/School Liaison for record-keeping in the BCS EL database. This EL database is compared to PowerSchool records each semester to ensure correct information is recorded in PowerSchool and in BCS EL data records. The EL Enrollment form is part of the BCS District Plan, Appendix.

The table below contains codes used by ALSDE Student Assessment and PowerSchool, along with a definition of codes. For State assessment and accountability purposes, the ALSDE uses one coding system for ELs. Similar codes are also used by the ALSDE for data collection from PowerSchool. See Table 1 for a list of comparisons of codes. All PowerSchool Managers have been trained to use PowerSchool, and the BCS District PowerSchool Manager communicates updates and training necessary for accurate PowerSchool maintenance and record keeping.

Codes for State Assessments	PowerSchool Codes	Definitions of Codes
Non-ELs	0	Students whose home language surveys do *not* indicate a language other than English spoken in the home. These are *not* students classified as NOMPHLOTE
EL-1 EL Year 1	1	Limited English Proficient students who are in their first year in a U.S. school.
EL-2 EL Year 2 or more	2	Limited English Proficient students who are in their second year or more in a U.S. school.
FEL-1 1st Year Monitoring	3	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their first year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take ACCESS for ELLs® English Language Proficiency test.
FEL-2 2nd Year Monitoring	4	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their second year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take ACCESS for ELLs®.
FEL-3 3rd Year Monitoring	8	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their third year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take ACCESS for ELLs®.
FEL-4 4th Year Monitoring	9	Students who have exited the ESL program and are in their fourth year of systematic monitoring. These students no longer take ACCESS for ELLs®.
FEL	5	Former Limited English Proficient students who have successfully completed two years of monitoring and are no longer LEP.
EL Waived Services	6	Students who are LEP yet parents have refused supplemental Title III / Title I services.
NOM PHLOTE	7	National Origin Minority Student Whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English. These students have a non-English language background but are fluent in English and do not require ESL services. Parents, however, may need information in their home language.

NOTE: English learners whose parents have waived supplemental Title III services will still be coded in PowerSchool as English learners. These students should have an additional entry into the "EL Waived Title III Services" field in PowerSchool indicating their waiver option. These students must be assessed on the ACCESS for ELLs English proficiency test until they are proficient in English with a composite score of 4.8 or above.

Include the LEA's method for **evaluating the effectiveness of its program** for English learners

- LEA engagement in the continuous improvement cycle
- In relation to English proficiency and challenging state academic standards

English Learners whose parents have waived supplemental Title III / Title I services must be assessed on the ACCESS for ELs® English language proficiency test until they are proficient in English with a composite score of 4.8 or above. Students are coded on the ACCESS for ELs® test as having waived services.

ESL PROGRAM EVALUATION

The instructional goals of the Blount County Schools (BCS) EL Program are to:

- Increase English language proficiency to support successful independent functioning in the general education setting.
- Provide opportunities for English learners (ELs) to reach their full academic potential, graduate college- and career-ready, and pursue postsecondary success.

A. PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS

The effectiveness of the EL program is evaluated using a **continuous improvement cycle** that includes data collection, analysis, stakeholder input, and responsive action planning. The following methods and tools are used:

a. Data Collection and Monitoring

- **ACCESS for ELLs proficiency scores**: Annual growth and proficiency data (goal: 4.8 composite) are disaggregated by grade band, school, subgroup, and language domain to measure language development.
- **State academic assessment data** (e.g., ACAP Summative): Performance and growth data for ELs are compared to state benchmarks and non-EL peers to evaluate academic achievement in reading and math.
- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment**: Conducted annually and includes input from school leaders, EL teachers, classroom teachers, and families of EL students.
- **Progress Monitoring Data**: ELLevation documentation, classroom formative assessments, interim benchmarks, and teacher observation notes are used to gauge short-term growth and instructional effectiveness.

b. Program Review and Reporting

- **ALSDE Compilation Report**: Serves as the formal evaluation submitted to the Alabama State Department of Education.
- **BCS Five-Year ACCESS Data Report**: Tracks district-wide trends over time, supporting longitudinal analysis of language acquisition and reclassification rates.
- **School-Level Reviews**: Conducted annually to examine IELP implementation fidelity, EL accommodations, parent engagement, and instructional access.

c. Stakeholder Engagement

- **EL Advisory Committee**: Meets biannually to review EL data, share input on program effectiveness, and make recommendations for improvements.
- **Teacher and Administrator Surveys**: Gather feedback on instructional support, professional development needs, and resource alignment.
- **Family Feedback**: Collected through family engagement events, Title I meetings, and multilingual parent surveys to evaluate how well the district supports communication and academic engagement.

d. Continuous Improvement Cycle

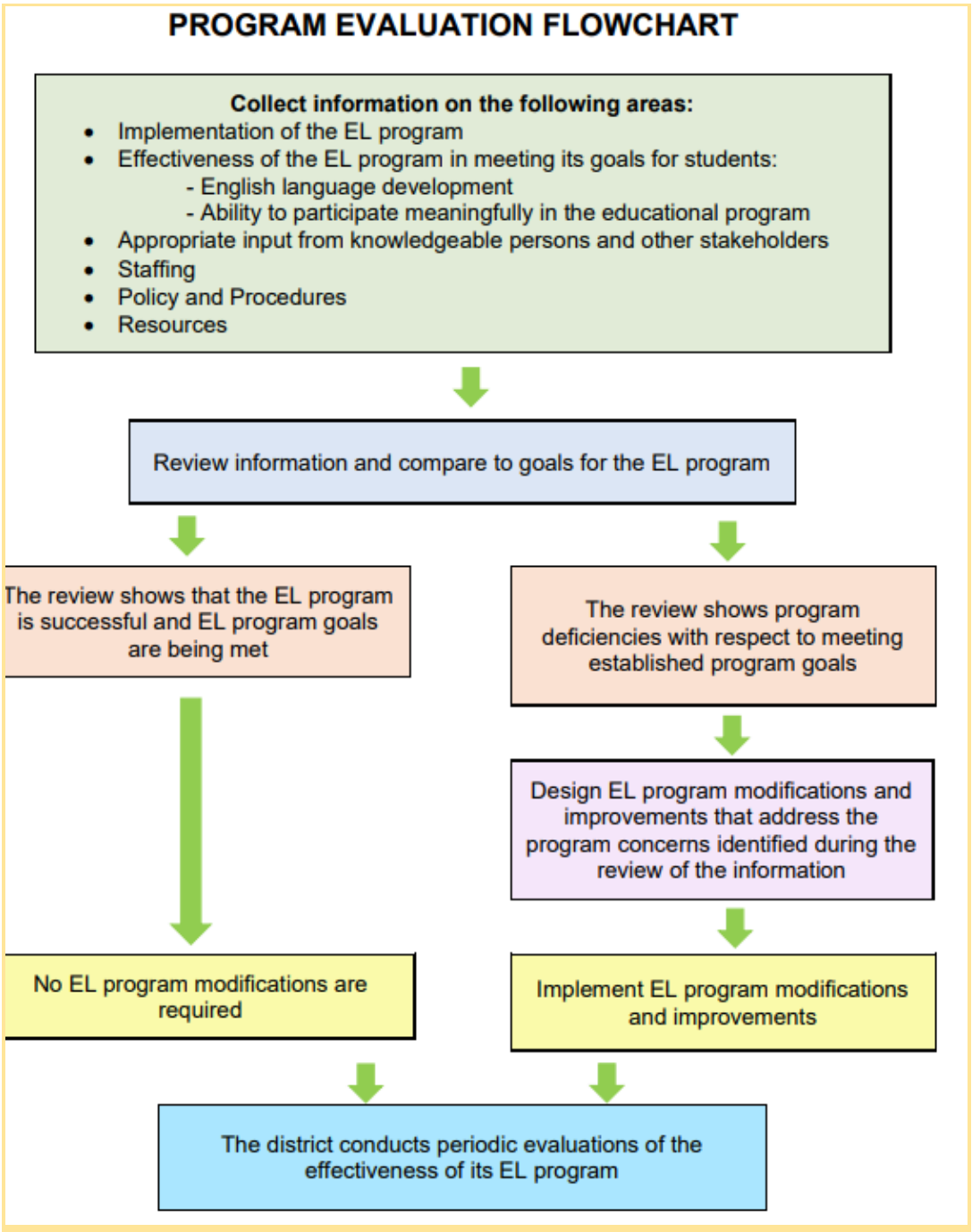
The EL program operates within the district's overall continuous improvement framework:

- **Plan**: Set goals for language development and academic achievement based on prior year's data and stakeholder input.
- **Do**: Implement strategies including evidence-based instruction, targeted PD, and use of ELLevation tools and IELPs.
- **Study**: Analyze progress through ACCESS results, academic performance data, and observational feedback.
- **Act**: Adjust program components (materials, staff support, PD offerings) based on findings. Reallocate resources if necessary and provide schools with updated guidance.

e. Alignment to English Proficiency and Challenging Academic Standards

- All program evaluation efforts are designed to ensure that ELs are making **measurable progress toward English proficiency** while also achieving **academic content mastery** aligned to the Alabama College and Career Readiness Standards.
- WIDA ELP Standards and Can-Do Descriptors are used to measure and scaffold academic rigor at each language development stage.

B. PROGRAM EVALUATION FLOWCHART



7) Include LEA's **method of identification and referral of ELs for special services (including Gifted Ed)**. Note that the Individual English Language Plan must describe how the school will communicate with the child and parent in their native language.

REFERRAL OF ELs TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

A. PROBLEM SOLVING TEAM (PST)

The PST process plays a central role in the implementation of academic, behavioral, and foundational wellness .

- English Learners may be referred to the PST only after differentiated instructional strategies determined by the IELP Committee have been provided for them for a reasonable amount of time in Tier I and Tier 2 and there is data showing that this instruction has been unsuccessful.
- **ELs cannot be referred to the PST if language is the barrier to achievement.**
- An EL staff member should be part of the PST team when EL students are referred.
- EL students must be served in the same way as all other students.
- **A student is considered at-risk if their grades in core subject areas (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and/or Social Studies) are below C, if they score below proficient on state standardized assessments, if they have chronic absenteeism, chronic behavioral referrals, etc.**
- Although it is a required step before special education testing, it is not used **only** for pre-special education testing purposes.

EL students may be referred to the RTI team provided they have been and are currently being served with appropriate instructional and assessment strategies determined by the IELP Committee, but continue to demonstrate a risk of failure. **(*An EL cannot be referred to the RTI team if language is the barrier to achievement. Once language has been eliminated as the barrier to achievement, EL students must be served in the same way as all other students*.)**

B. SPECIAL EDUCATION

ELs following normal developmental patterns for learning a new language are not eligible for the referral of special education services**. Cultural and linguistic backgrounds cause ELs to have special instructional needs. These needs will not serve as a basis for referral for a special education evaluation.**

Specific indicators which validate the need for special education evaluation, include:

- Poor communicative proficiency in the home as compared to siblings and age peers in bilingual environments, especially deficiencies noted by parents.
- English language development appears to be significantly different from that of peers who are speakers of other languages.
- Consideration of the amount of time the EL takes in developing the first and second languages.
- Developmental delays or other at-risk conditions observed of the EL.

Referral information may indicate the necessity of a **structured developmental history** to evaluate the student's problem. The information recorded should remove all doubt that socio-cultural factors are the primary contributors to the student's learning or behavior problems. Essential factors needed to make this determination may be beyond the referral information required for non-LEP/EL students.

Additional pertinent information regarding the EL referral form may include but not be limited to:

- Identification of a proficient use of native language (e.g., Home Language Survey/Identification, ACCESS, WIDA Screeners for Kindergarten-Grade 12).

- The extent to which the EL has received native language instruction and/or English language instruction prior to the referral.
- Experiential and/or enrichment services for students for diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds.
- The school's efforts to involve parents prior to referral.
- The amount of time and extent of services in an academic program for students who have had little or no formal schooling.
- Length of residency of the referred student in the United States and prior school experience in the native country and in an English language school system.
- Attempts to remediate the student's performance prior to referral, including any supplementary aids or support services provided for this purpose

a. Testing for Special Education Services

Tests which will be administered to the ELs, will be determined by the IELP Team. Presentation of the test in the native language of the student presents a clearer picture to the psychometrics. There will be provisions for an interpreter if needed. Personnel trained in the test administration will administer all tests.

b. Summary of Special Education Referral Procedures for ELs

The **special education specialist** is the **primary administrator** responsible for the provision of services to all special education students.

i. Procedures for a New Referral

1. Follow EL procedures for identification.
2. Typically, a student will have participated in an appropriate EL Program for a minimum of one year.
3. Documentation of assessments, accommodations, and interventions submitted to the PST.
4. The PST will submit collected, documented information to the system EL Program area specialist or the EL resource teacher for review and recommendations for additional support or intervention strategies.
5. The PST accepts a recommendation made by the EL Program area specialist after the documentation of additional support or intervention strategies.
6. The IEP team will review the referral with EL Staff, providing input to the team.
7. All IDEA procedures guide the referral and evaluation process.

ii. Criteria for Assessment

1. The IEP team will determine with input from the EL Staff evaluations and assessments and secure parental permission for evaluation.
2. The instrument of choice for intellectual functioning is the *Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT)*.
3. Native language evaluations and testing with an interpreter help the student access a fair testing environment.
4. Eligibility for Special Education.

iii. Development of the Individual Education Program (IEP)

1. EL Staff will participate in the eligibility meeting.
2. EL Staff will assist upon request and review the initial development of the IEP and in subsequent IEPs, until the student exits from the EL Program.

Note that ELs with disabilities should be provided English language acquisition services as determined appropriate by the EL specialist and the IEP Team, and this information should be included as part of the Individualized Education Program (EIP) on the Profile Page.
Eligible EL students may receive both special education and English language acquisition services concurrently.

C. PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent participation is a required part of the special education process, and to ensure active participation, accommodations will be made at all meetings and in written communications for the non-English speaking parent. This may also be necessary for parents of students who are of National Origin of Minority and whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English. (NOMPHLOTE). These accommodations must include an interpreter for all communication, and written communication must be provided in the parent's native language.

D. PARTICIPATION IN OTHER PROGRAMS

- ELs have equal access to the full range of district programs, including special education, gifted and talented programs, career technical education, Title I, homeless, At-Risk, and non-academic and extracurricular activities.
- Students and parents receive notification of such programs available through newsletters, telephone calls, handouts, and informational meetings for parents (with interpreters available).
- EL and mainstream teachers also encourage ELs to participate in extracurricular and non-academic activities.

Gifted and Talented

- ELs qualify for the Gifted and Talented Program by the same standard native English-speaking students quality.
- EL's academic performance in the first language is also a consideration.

D. ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY
1) Describe how the LEA will encourage and hold schools accountable for **annually measuring the English proficiency** of ELs and for participating in the state-administered testing program. ● Including coordination with the LEA Test Coordinator/ Director ● Including communication of assessment and accountability requirements to schools

ASSESSMENT

A. PARTICIPATION IN STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

All ELs must participate in the statewide Student Assessment Program for accountability purposes with these exceptions:

- EL students, during their **first 12 months of enrollment in the U.S. schools**, **will not be required** to participate in the Reading/Language Arts test of the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) Summative or the Reading/Language Arts test of the ACAP *Alternate*. Flexibility is not given to EL students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools for any of the ACT assessments.
- EL students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools **must participate** in the Mathematics and Science tests of ACAP Summative and ACAP Alternate. These students **must participate** in all parts of the PreACT, ACT with Writing and the ACT WorkKeys assessments.

EL students, for which this is not their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools, must participate in all subjects and all tests in the statewide Student Assessment Program. EL students in Grades K-12, regardless of the number of years of enrollment in U.S. schools must participate in Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs™), the state-administered English language proficiency test, or the WIDA Alternate ACCESS™, the state-administered English language proficiency test for students in Grades 1-12 who have a significant cognitive disability.

All ELs, whether they receive or waive supplemental Title III services, must be tested annually on ACCESS for ELLs ™ or WIDA Alternate ACCESS™. Students in their first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools who take ACCESS for ELLs™ or WIDA Alternate ACCESS™ will be counted as participants toward meeting the 95% participation requirement for Reading/Language Arts.

EL students who score a 4.0 or below on the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, will be exempt from AlaKids and marked as "Not Observed." See AlaKiDS – Early Childhood Education (alabama.gov)

Participation of EL students in any of the assessments that allow flexibility during the first 12 months of enrollment in U.S. schools, will not result in their scores being used for accountability determination. However, these students will be counted as participants toward meeting the 95% participation requirement for accountability purposes.

The BCS Test Coordinator will use the Alabama Student Assessment Resource Guide for English Learners to ensure that all educators are adequately informed of the policies and procedures set forth by the ALSDE in order to provide meaningful experiences that will enhance the education of BCS's ELs. All educators who participate in the administration of the ACCESS for ELLs, Alternate ACCESS, and WIDA Screeners are trained on their specific role, including participation in Test Security Training as outlined in The Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program Integrity Handbook for Test Administrators.

B. MEASURING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY FOR ELS

- The Federal Programs Director and staff will evaluate ESL Compilation Data, monitor state assessment results for each school in the system and the data of disaggregated populations (including ELs and former ELs), and communicate results with other stakeholders.
- The progress of individual students is monitored by the regular classroom teacher, the EL teacher, and/or intervention personnel at least twice every nine weeks.
- The information obtained from EL program reviews and student monitoring is used to make data-driven decisions regarding instructional plans and practices (at the classroom, school, and district levels), professional development, and changes to the EL District Plan. The objective of every decision and change is to ensure that students make yearly interim progress on standardized evaluations and reach the highest possible levels of English language and academic proficiency in the shortest time possible.

C. ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ELS ON STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

- Decisions regarding appropriate accommodations for EL students must be made on an individual basis by the IELP Committee.
- The IELP Committee considers the content and nature of the specific assessment, the level of the student's language proficiency, and the student's documented history of accommodations (twelve-month history) in the regular instructional program when making decisions about appropriate accommodations for state assessments.

- BCS uses the approved Accommodations Checklist found at www.alabamaachieves.org under the Student Assessment tab. (Alabama Student Assessment Program Policies and Procedures for Students of Special Populations).

2) Describe how the LEA will **hold schools accountable** for meeting proficiency and long term goals.
- Monitoring and evaluating school engagement with continuous improvement plan

ACCOUNTABILITY

Blount County Schools holds each school accountable for meeting proficiency and long-term goals for English Learners through a structured system of data monitoring, school-level support, and continuous improvement processes.

A. DATA MONITORING and GOAL SETTING

The LEA uses multiple data sources to track progress toward annual proficiency and long-term growth goals:

- ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS data are reviewed for each EL student, school, and district-wide.
- Cumulative Growth Targets are used to evaluate whether students are on track to reach the proficiency benchmark (4.8 composite) within the state's seven-year expectation.
- BCS Interim Progress Target Reports, ALSDE Compilation Reports, and State ACAP Summative Data for ELs are disaggregated and reviewed to inform instructional planning and support.

Each school uses these data points to set language development and academic achievement goals for EL students in their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).

B. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE and ACCOUNTABILITY

The LEA ensures school-level engagement with English learner goals through a continuous improvement cycle that includes:

- **District Instructional Team (DIT) Meetings:** During these quarterly meetings, members evaluate the implementation of high-impact instructional practices, analyze student performance data, and monitor progress on Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) goals for all students, with a focused lens on special populations—including English learners. The team identifies trends, discusses barriers, and recommends targeted supports to ensure equity and academic growth across all schools.
- **School-Level Data Meetings**: Schools meet to review individual EL student growth, update instructional plans, and monitor IELP implementation.
- **Walkthroughs and Observations**: District and school leaders conduct regular walkthroughs to monitor classroom instruction. Look-fors for teachers of EL students include implementation of SDAIE strategies, use of WIDA ELP standards, and differentiation for language proficiency levels. Feedback is provided to teachers and school leaders to support continuous improvement.
- **CIP Monitoring and Feedback**: The Federal Programs team reviews each school's CIP to ensure that EL goals are specific, measurable, and based on disaggregated student data. Schools receive feedback and are required to revise goals or actions if they do not demonstrate sufficient attention to EL needs.

C. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT and SUPPORT

To support accountability and improvement, Blount County Schools provides:

- Annual professional development on SDAIE strategies, WIDA integration, and data use for EL student growth.
- Ongoing ELLevation training to ensure teachers know how to use Can-Do Descriptors, IELPs, and language level data to guide instruction.
- Targeted coaching for schools with persistent achievement gaps among ELs.

D. FORMAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

In addition to ongoing monitoring, the LEA compiles an annual ESL Program Evaluation Report (aligned to the ALSDE Compilation Report) summarizing ACCESS growth, proficiency rates, reclassification data, and EL performance on state assessments. This report is reviewed with the BCS Federal Programs Advisory Committee and informs adjustments to district-wide EL strategies.

E. Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
1) Describe how the LEA will inform EL parents using information and notification in a language the parents can read and understand.

PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with federal requirements Blount County Schools (BCS) ensures that parents of English Learners (ELs) receive timely, accurate information in a language they can understand, both orally and in writing.

BCS uses the Home Language Survey to identify students who may be English Learners. Within 30 days of the start of the school year—or within 10 days of enrollment during the school year—parents of identified EL students receive a Parent Notification Letter that includes:

- The reason for their child's identification as an English Learner.
- The child's current English proficiency level and how it was determined (WIDA Screener or ACCESS).
- The academic achievement level of the child.
- A description of the English Language Instruction Educational Program (ELIEP) and how it will support English acquisition and academic growth.
- The methods of instruction used, including any supplemental Title III services the student is eligible for (e.g., push-in, pull-out instruction).
- The expected timeline and exit criteria for English language proficiency (ACCESS score of 4.8 composite).
- How the program supports students with disabilities, if applicable.
- Information about parent rights, including the right to decline participation in supplemental Title III services.

BCS distinguishes core language instruction (a civil rights obligation) from supplemental Title III services, which are federally funded, add-on supports. Parents have the right to opt out of supplemental Title III services, but they cannot waive the district's legal obligation to provide equitable access to content and language

instruction under civil rights law. It is important that parents understand this distinction and that the LEA document their choices annually.

All parent communications are translated using tools such as the ELLevation platform and TransAct, which provide documents in over 35 languages. For languages not readily available, BCS arranges for oral interpretation or individualized translation through community partners or interpreters. No student is delayed in services due to language barriers in communication with the family.

LEGAL PRECEDENT RELATED TO ENGLISH LEARNERS

1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." -42 U.S.C. § 2000d.

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Public institutions (like schools) must provide equal quality of educational services to everyone, including those who are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Title VI covers all educational programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education (ED).

May 25, 1970, Memorandum

"The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify policy on issues concerning the responsibility of LEAs to provide equal educational opportunity to national origin minority group children deficient in English language skills.

- Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the education program offered by a LEA, the LEA must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students. School districts have the responsibility to notify national origin-minority group parents of school activities, which are called to the attention of other parents. Such notice in order to be adequate may have to be provided in a language other than English.

Lau v. Nichols (US Supreme Court Decision 1974)

"The failure of the San Francisco school system to provide English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak English, or to provide them with other adequate instructional procedures, denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program, and thus violates § 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based "on the ground of race, color, or national origin," in "any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance," and the implementing regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Pp. 414 U. S. 565-569."

- The Supreme Court stated that these students should be treated with equality among the schools. Among other things, Lau reflects the now-widely accepted view that a person's language is so closely intertwined with their national origin (the country someone or their ancestors came from) that language-based discrimination is effectively a proxy for national origin discrimination.

1974– Equal Education Opportunities Act

"The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 states: "No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual based on his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs."

The EEOA prohibits discriminatory conduct against, including segregating students on the basis of race, color or national origin, and discrimination against faculty and staff serving these groups of individuals, as it

interferes with their equal educational opportunities. Furthermore, the EEOA requires LEAs to take action to overcome students' language barriers that impede equal participation in educational programs.

Plyler v. Doe (U.S. Supreme Court Decision 1982)

"The illegal aliens who are plaintiffs in these cases challenging the statute may claim the benefit of the Equal Protection Clause, which provides that no State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" . . . The undocumented status of these children does not establish a sufficient rational basis for denying them benefits that the State affords other residents . . . No national policy is perceived that might justify the State in denying these children an elementary education." -457 U.S. 202

- The right to public education for immigrant students regardless of their legal status is guaranteed.
- Schools may not require proof of citizenship or legal residence to enroll or provide services to immigrant students.
- Schools may not ask about the student or a parent's immigration status.
- Parents are not required to give a Social Security number.
- Students are entitled to receive all school services, including the following: Free or reduced breakfast or lunch, – transportation, – educational services, and – NCLB, IDEA, etc.

Presidential Executive Order 13166 (Clinton; 2000)

"Entities receiving assistance from the federal government must take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information those entities provide."

- Recipients of federal assistance are required to help students overcome language barriers by implementing consistent standardized language assistance programs for LEP. In addition, persons with limited English proficiency cannot be required to pay for services to ensure their meaningful and equitable access to programs, services, and benefits.
- See The United States Department of Justice: https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166

2016 – Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act

Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) requires that all English Learners (ELs) receive high-quality instruction in both English language development and grade-level academic content. ESSA provides local educational agencies with flexibility in designing instructional programs while holding them accountable for the English language proficiency and academic achievement of EL students.

- Under Title III, states are required to develop standards for English Language Proficiency and to link those standards to the state's Academic Content Standards. Schools must make sure that ELLs are part of their state's accountability system and that ELs' academic progress is followed over time by
- establishing learning standards, that is, statements of what children in that state should know and be able to do in reading, math, and other subjects at various grade levels;
- creating annual assessments (standardized tests, in most states) to measure student progress in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high schools;
- setting a level (cut-off score) at which students are considered proficient in tested areas; and
- Reporting to the public on what percentages of students are proficient, with the information broken down by race, income, disability, language proficiency, and gender subgroups.

Castañeda v. Pickard, [5th Cir., 1981] 648 F.2d 989 (US COURT OF APPEALS)

"In 1981, in the most significant decision regarding the education of language-minority students since Lau v. Nichols, the 5th Circuit Court established a three-pronged test for evaluating programs serving English language learners. According to the Castañeda standard, schools must base their program on educational theory recognized as sound or considered to be a legitimate experimental strategy, – implement the program with resources and personnel necessary to put the theory into practice, and – evaluate programs and make adjustments where necessary to ensure that adequate progress is being made. [648 F. 2d 989 (5th Circuit, 1981)]."

This case established a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of a district's program for the English language learner:

1. Is the program based on an educational theory recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is it considered by experts as a legitimate experimental strategy?
2. Are the programs and practices, including resources and personnel, reasonably calculated to implement this theory effectively?
3. Does the school district evaluate its programs and make adjustments where needed to ensure that language barriers are actually being overcome?

KEY TERMS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

- **ACCESS for ELLs™**: Standards-based, criterion referenced English language proficiency test. It assesses social and instructional English as well as the language associated with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within the school context across the four language domains.
- **BICS**: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills. The language ability required for verbal face-to-face communication. Students are generally proficient in BICS in 1-2 years.
- **CALP**: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. The language ability required for academic achievement. Students are generally proficient in CALP in 5-7 years.
- **EL**: English learner. Student who is not yet proficient in English.
- **ELD**: English Language Development. Program of instruction for English learners
- **ESL**: English as a Second Language. Program of instruction for English learners
- **ELP**: English proficiency level
- **FEL**: Former English learner; monitored for four years.
- **HQIA**: High-Quality Instruction and Assessment
- **Language Dominance:** The measurement of the degree of bilingualism, which implies a comparison of the proficiencies in two or more languages.
- **Language Proficiency:** The degree to which the student exhibits control over the use of language, including the measurement of expressive and receptive language skills in the areas of phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and including the areas of pragmatics or language use within various domains or social circumstances. Proficiency in a language is judged independently and does not imply a lack of proficiency in another language.
- **LEP:** Limited-English-proficient. No longer used. (See EL)
- **LIEP**: Language Instruction Educational Program
- **L1**: Student's native language
- **L2**: Student's second language (possibly more than two languages).
- **ML**: Multilingual learner
- **NOMPHLOTE**: National Origin Minority whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English: A student whose native language is other than English and who does NOT qualify for EL services. ❖ SEI: Structured English Immersion. Program of instruction for English learners
- **WIDA™ ELD Standards**: Rigorous academic language standards provided by WIDA™ for the purposes of guiding social and academic content instruction through the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, at the ELs' English language proficiency levels.
- **I-ELP**: An individualized EL language plan for an EL student.
- **WIDA MODEL™**: An EL benchmark assessment
- **WIDA Screener Online**: English language proficiency assessment given to students in grades 1-12 to help identify and designate English learners
- **WIDA™**: Alabama is a part of the WIDA™ consortium and adopted the WIDA™ Consortium's ELD Standards for Pre-Kindergarten–Grade 12 encompass:
    - Social and Instructional language
    - Language for Language Arts
    - Language for Mathematics
    - Language for Science
    - Language for Social Studies

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES:

Alabama State Department of Education. Instructional Service Division - Federal Programs Section. Alabama State Department of Education English Learner Guidebook - 2024 edition – This document is in compliance with the Office for Civil Rights (Compliance Review #04-98-5023) for providing services to students who are English Learners (ELs). It incorporates requirements and applicable references to The Every Student Succeeds Act, of 2015 (ESSA).

Blount County Schools Board Policy Manual (2024). Available at: https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/PolicyListing.aspx?S=2086&ptid=buIeBac7vUQEPkDzL6PLwg== Cited in-test as (BCS Board Policy, Code).

Marzano, R.J. (2001) *Classroom Instruction that Works; Research-based strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, ASCD