

Executive Numbered Memo 007-2009-10 – Assessment of Essential Skills Options for LEP Students

December 7, 2009

TO: Superintendents, Principals, and District Testing Coordinators

RE: Policy regarding assessment of the Essential Skills options for Limited English Proficient Students

Summary

On December 3, 2009, the State Board of Education voted to adopt a policy allowing a small number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students the option of demonstrating the Essential Skills in a language other than English.

Based on a recommendation by the Assessment of Essential Skills Review Panel (AESRP), an advisory group comprised of K12 and higher education representatives, the policy maintains the rigor of the Oregon diploma while allowing students more flexibility in demonstrating their proficiency in the Essential Skills required for graduation.

This policy addresses the needs of a small group of highly skilled, highly motivated students who have not had sufficient time in the US to gain the English language skills necessary to demonstrate their academic content knowledge. These students must be able to meet all other graduation requirements, including credit completion, in order to graduate under this option. ODE estimates that this population would be between 250-300 students per year.

The policy, as adopted unanimously by the State Board of Education, is as follows:

1. Districts shall adopt a process to allow LEP students to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skill of Applying Mathematics in their language of origin using statewide or local assessments as appropriate and available.
2. Districts shall adopt a process to allow LEP students to demonstrate proficiency in Reading, Writing, and any additional Essential Skills in their language of origin using statewide or local assessments as appropriate and available if:
 - a. The student has been in US schools 5 years or less
 - b. The student receives at least a level 3 (Intermediate) on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)

As noted above, for the Essential Skills other than Apply Mathematics, eligible LEP students will be limited to those who have been in US schools for 5 years or less (at time of graduation) and to those who have received at least a level 3 on the ELPA* (by graduation). This ensures that the policy is limited to those students who have not yet had sufficient time to fully master academic English but who have gained sufficient English skills to pursue their next steps (college, community-college, or workforce training). The rigor of these native language assessments must be equal to the rigor of English language assessment options.

Districts can expect an Oregon Administrative Rule addressing this policy to be in place by the start of the 2010-11 school year.

*ODE will work with stakeholders to investigate additional options for students to demonstrate their English proficiency.

(Please see below for a sample communication on this topic)

TO: Superintendents, Principals, District Test Coordinators, and Public Information Officers
RE: Constituent questions regarding assessment options for ELL students

We know that your district may receive constituent questions or comments regarding the recent State Board decision on assessment options for ELL students. The adopted policy is covered in the number memo above, but we thought it might be helpful to share some possible sample language on this. Below is some sample language ODE is using to help explain this policy decision. Feel free to use any part of this in your communications with stakeholders. In addition, ODE will provide an FAQ on this topic to District Test Coordinators in this week's Assessment and Accountability Update.

Dear _____,

I appreciate you taking the time to write us and I am happy to address your concerns about the decision by the State Board of Education regarding assessment options for a small number of Oregon's English Language Learners. There has been some confusion surrounding this issue and I hope that I am able to provide some clarity on the intent and purpose of this policy.

In this recent action, the Board was addressing a challenge that typically affects 200-300 students out of an average of 30,000 high school graduates each year in Oregon – those who are able to demonstrate proficiency in the required essential skills of math, writing and reading, but who have recently moved to the United States and have not developed sufficient language skills to demonstrate those abilities in English. To graduate, those students will now be able to demonstrate those skills in their native language in addition to proving they have achieved at least an intermediate level of English proficiency – approximately equivalent to what it would take to enter a community college. The rigor of these native language assessments must equal the rigor of the English language Essential Skills assessments, and students must be able to meet all other graduation requirements, including credit completion, in order to graduate under this option.

The evidence presented to the Board indicates that this is a better approach for ensuring that the students continue their development in English, while also giving them the opportunity to proceed to the next steps in their education. You can read a copy of the [background information presented to the Board for their deliberations](#) here.

I hope this gives you a better understanding of the policy. We appreciate your feedback.

Sincerely,