

Executive Numbered Memorandum 009-2013-14 - Proper Identification of Spanish-Speaking English Learners for the Kindergarten Assessment

**To:** All School District Superintendents, District Test Coordinators, and Title III Directors

**Re:** Proper Identification of Spanish-Speaking English Learners for the Kindergarten Assessment

**Summary**

In fall 2013, kindergarten students participated in the state-wide Kindergarten Assessment. As this was the first year of the assessment, one component – the Spanish literacy assessment – was voluntary. Beginning in the fall of 2014, this portion of the assessment will no longer be voluntary and must be administered to all eligible Spanish-speaking English learners.

Participation in the Early Spanish Literacy measure of the Kindergarten Assessment is restricted to **only** those students who have been identified as Spanish-speaking English Learners who qualify for services. The proper procedure for that identification is outlined below and further illustrated in the flow chart [linked here](#). No other kindergarten students shall be included in this measure. Districts shall develop and implement a plan for properly identifying students whose primary language is other than English. This identification is required within the first 30 days of the start of school, or within two (2) weeks of a student being enrolled in a district (Title III **SECTION 3302 (A), (B), (C), (D)**). For the Kindergarten Assessment, this identification is required prior to the administration of the Spanish Early Literacy component.

During the Kindergarten Assessment window, all incoming kindergarten students will be administered the English literacy assessment, the Math knowledge assessment, and the Approaches to Learning scale rating. Identified kindergarten ELs who have a first language of Spanish will be administered the 1-page Spanish literacy assessment in addition to the English literacy assessment.

**The Rule:** Section 9 of the 2014-15 [Test Administration Manual](#) states that English Learners taking the Kindergarten Assessment whose language of origin is Spanish will receive an early Spanish literacy assessment in addition to the early English literacy assessment. The Spanish literacy assessment measures skills in identifying Spanish letter names.

**Promising Practice:** Education teams within the school or district may use the flow chart [linked here](#) to guide the process of identifying Spanish-speaking English Learners for the Kindergarten Assessment. Once these criteria are met, the student is given the 1-page Early Spanish Literacy measure in addition to the English literacy assessment.

**Rationale:** With the exception of bi-literacy or dual immersion programs, English is the language of instruction throughout a child's K-12 education and students will need to master English in order to be prepared for college and career. As such, all ELs are given the English literacy measures to establish a baseline of their knowledge and skills upon entering the public school system. However, there is also value in understanding a student's literacy skills in his or her native language. Spanish-speaking kindergarteners make up the vast majority of EL kindergarteners in Oregon. By assessing in both languages, educators will have information on the appropriate baseline in both English and Spanish for Spanish-speaking ELs.

**Identifying a Student as a Native Spanish Speaker**

There are two ways to identify potentially eligible students: Home Language Survey and teacher referral. Both are described in the section below.

Please note: These guidelines are around identification for English Language Development (ELD) programs generally. Only those students who meet these criteria and are native Spanish speakers will be administered the Spanish literacy assessment. Identification for ELD services is the first step in determining which students should be administered this assessment.

**Home Language Survey (HLS)**

TransACT Communications, Inc. has created many compliance related forms, including those required for Title III. These forms, translated into several languages, are available through TransACT at: <http://www.transACT.com/>.

If a school chooses not to use the TransACT forms, the forms used by the school must contain the same elements as the TransACT form in order to comply with current federal regulations.

Districts must:

- Identify the Primary Home Language Other than English (PHLOTE) of all students.
- Use some sort of home language survey. Though a specific form is not required, TransACT's templates are the most commonly used instrument to identify students as potentially eligible for ELD services. Templates for HLS are available through TransACT at <http://www.transACT.com>.
- Ask questions that have to do solely with home languages of the individual students. If a parent (guardian) gives a single affirmative answer to whether:
  - the child learned to speak a language other than English first;
  - the child currently speaks a language other than English; or
  - a language other than English is spoken in the home;

then the child qualifies for initial assessment.

While such information is helpful, inquiring exclusively about home languages can be misleading. For instance, the child may have spent only his or her infancy in a foreign country, foreign-born grandparents may be living in the home, or perhaps members of the family are learning a foreign language together. Such situations may not have an impact on a child's ability to speak English and should not lead to placing the child in a program for ELs.

For proper placement, the survey could include questions about the child's ability to speak English. The following questions would be reasonable in a primary home language survey:

- What language or languages are spoken in your child's home?
- What language or languages does your child speak?
- In what language does your child communicate with:
  - adults in the home?
  - with friends or peers?

Finally, the HLS is administered to all students once rather than annually.

### **Teacher Referral**

The HLS may indicate a student is English speaking only and no referral is made for initial program placement assessment; however, occasionally, some students may need to be identified as potentially eligible for ELD services (for example: Native American students). In these few cases, the student's classroom teacher may complete a referral form that highlights and provides evidence (classroom work, work samples scored with appropriate rubric, etc.) of the student's linguistic needs. A school team reviews the referral and may make a determination to have the student assessed for initial placement. In these cases, a notation on HLS explaining the reason(s) the student is placed in the ELD program is good practice and always helpful.

Based on the HLS, students are given an initial identification assessment.

Districts are required to include their identification criteria in their EL plan. These criteria should clarify which students are identified as ELs and which students do not qualify based on the identification assessment showing academic English proficiency. Once a student is identified as an EL, the district must notify parents within 30 days at the beginning of the school year or within two (2) weeks of a student being enrolled in a district (forms are available through [TransACT.com](http://www.transACT.com)).

OAR 581-023-0100 (4) (1) Pursuant to ORS 327.013(7)(a)(B), the resident school districts shall receive an additional .5 times the ADM of all eligible students enrolled in an English as a Second Language program. To be eligible, a student must be in the ADM of the school district in grades kindergarten through 12 and be a language minority student attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in a program which meets basic U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights guidelines. These guidelines provide for:

- (a) A systematic procedure for identifying students who may need ESL classes, and for assessing their language acquisition and academic needs