Exit Criteria Study
Utilizing the ACCESS
English Language Proficiency Assessment

Final Report

Submitted to the
South Dakota Department of Education

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Background

Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) requires state education agencies to develop three progress and attainment benchmarks, called annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs), for English language learners (ELLs). AMAO 1 relates to the proportion of ELLs receiving Title III services who have "made progress" toward attaining English language proficiency in a given year. AMAO 2 involves the proportion of ELLs who have been receiving Title III services and no longer need, and should be exited from, these services. AMAOs 1 and 2 must be based on annual assessments of English proficiency in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and must also yield a comprehension score that may be derived from a combination of reading and listening items. AMAO 3 targets academic achievement and, in most cases, is simply the adequate yearly progress (AYP) outcome for the ELL student group.

The state of South Dakota became a member of the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium effective July 1, 2008; thus, the state's English language proficiency assessment is the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS). The ACCESS is a K-12 English language proficiency (ELP) assessment and was administered the test for the first time to all South Dakota public school students identified as limited English proficient in February 2009.

Now that its new ELP assessment is in place, the SDDOE is revising its AMAO definitions. The first step in this process is the definition of the criteria a student must meet to be exited from English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education services (AMAO 2). The percent of students meeting these criteria each year must be considered in relation to a district-level target, which the SDDOE will set subsequently via another process not described in this report. The SDDOE contracted with edCount, LLC, an independent entity with no stake in the outcome of this process, to support consideration of the exit criteria.

The U.S. Department of Education has imposed some specifications on states' definitions of exit criteria and district-level targets for AMAO 2 (Final Notice of Interpretations, October 2008). All students must be included in the exit analyses (not only students who would reasonably be nearing readiness for exit) and exit criteria cannot vary across levels of English language proficiency or across grades. While district targets can vary across cohorts of students as defined by years in ESL/bilingual education programs, most states have chosen to identify a single set of criteria for exit and a single target for districts.

The SDDOE will make the final decisions for each of its AMAO definitions and has already made the decision to use a conjunctive model for AMAO 2, where both a minimum total composite score and a minimum literacy score must be achieved to warrant exit. The SDDOE also highly values the input of South Dakota educators in the decision-making process and considers this input especially important because the exit criteria carry stakes for individual students. Thus, the SDDOE chose to convene a panel of educators to address the following question, which is fundamental to AMAO 2:

> What score on the ACCESS best identifies the level at which English Language learners can meaningfully participate in English only classroom and, therefore, should be used to exit students from English as a second language services?

Generating a recommended answer to this question from educators was the focus of the study described here.

Study Method and Process

As noted above, this study was designed to address this question noted above

> What score on the ACCESS best identifies the level at which English Language learners can meaningfully participate in English only classroom and, therefore, should be used to exit students from English as a second language services?

The process and methods used in this study are described below.

Study Logistics and Process

Date and Location

The ratings for this study were obtained on August 10, 2009 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The panelists were recruited by the SD DOE. A total of 21 panelists participated in the Exit Criteria Standard Setting study. The agenda is provided in Appendix A.

Participants

A total of 21 panelists across the three grade levels representative of school districts across the state reviewed student assessment scores and participated in individual rounds of exit score ratings. Twenty of the panelists were female, one was male. Twenty of the panelists were Caucasian and one panelist was Native American. All panelists are current teachers and / or administrators in South Dakota who have administered either / both the ACCESS or WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) assessments within the last year. Eleven teachers are endorsed in elementary education, three are endorsed for middle school instruction and three are endorsed for high school instruction. Four participants are current administrators of English as a second language programs. Six of the panelists work on a colony, two work on a reservation, six work in K-12 programs with less than fifty students and seven panelists work in programs with fifty or more limited English proficient students. Teaching experience ranges from 3 to 22 years, with nine panelists having 10 or more years of teaching experience.

Rating and Recommendation Process

The rating process involved two steps.

First, panelists convened as a large group and were provided background information for the task. Participants reviewed the Title III assessment and accountability requirements and the ACCESS Can Do Descriptors (http://www.wida.us/standards/CAN_DOs/index.aspx), which define performance at each of the ACCESS proficiency levels. The panelists then viewed tables provided by WIDA of the logistic regression likelihood estimates by grade clusters (Appendix B) and three graphs representing the logistic regression between the Dakota STEP and the ACCESS assessments by 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade spans (Exhibits 1, 2, and 3, below).

Exhibit 1. Logistic Regression Graph between STEP and ACCESS 3-5 Grade Cluster

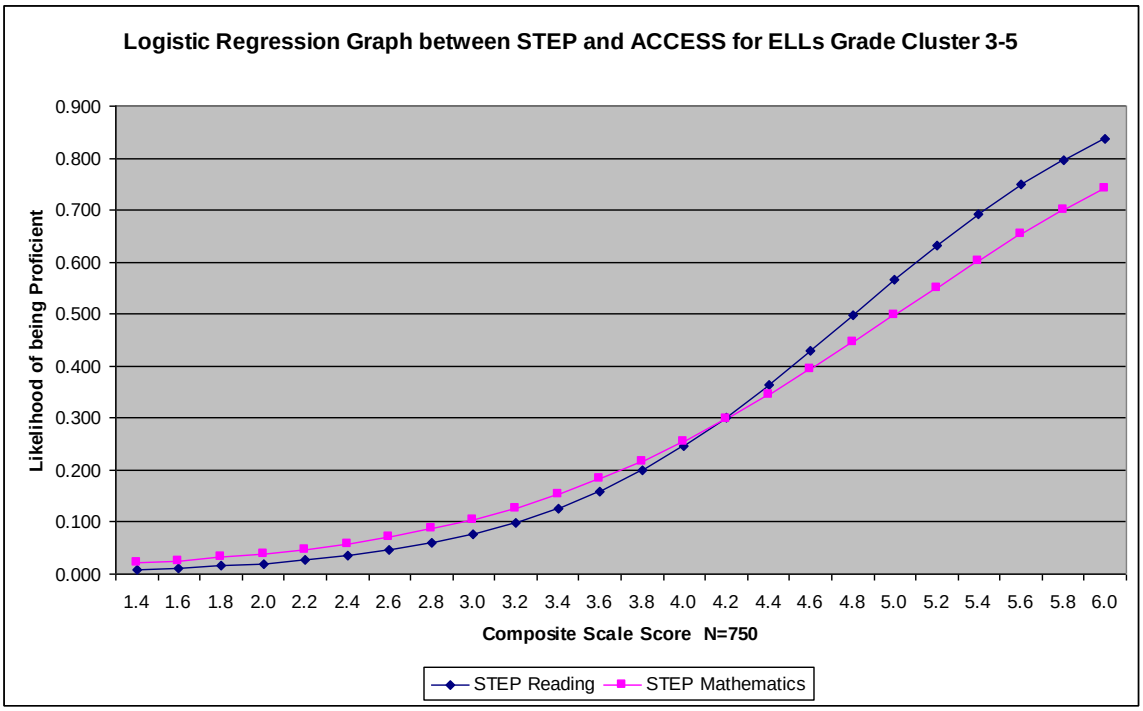


Exhibit 2. Logistic Regression Graph between STEP and ACCESS 6-8 Grade Cluster

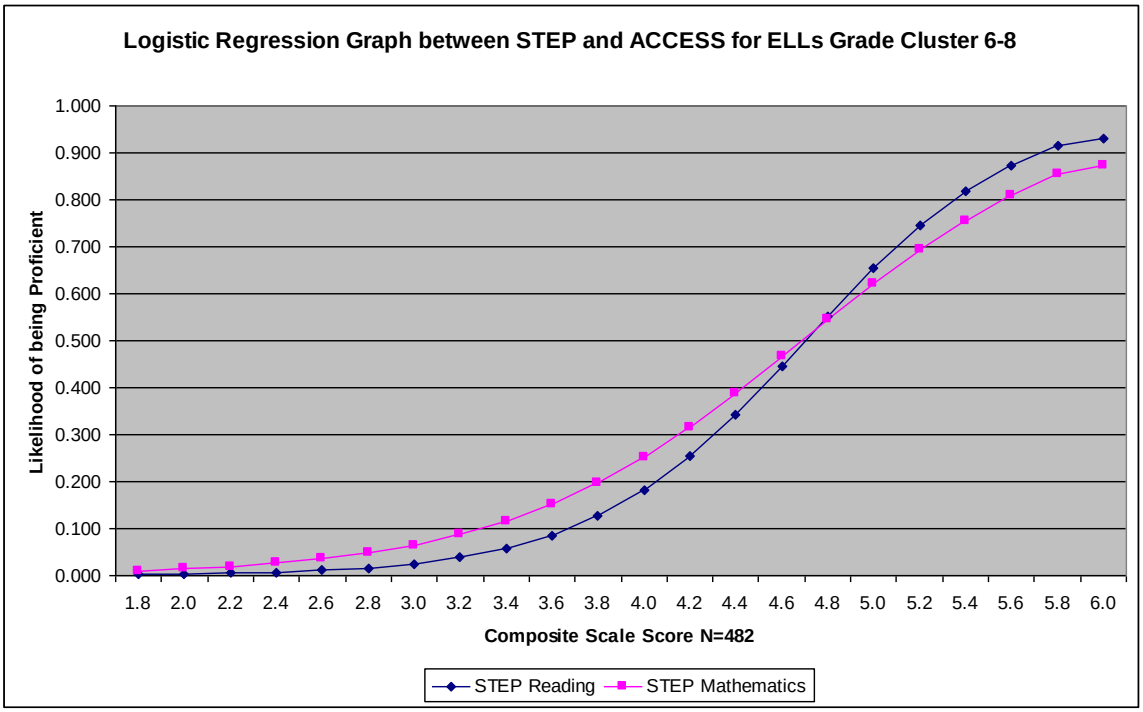
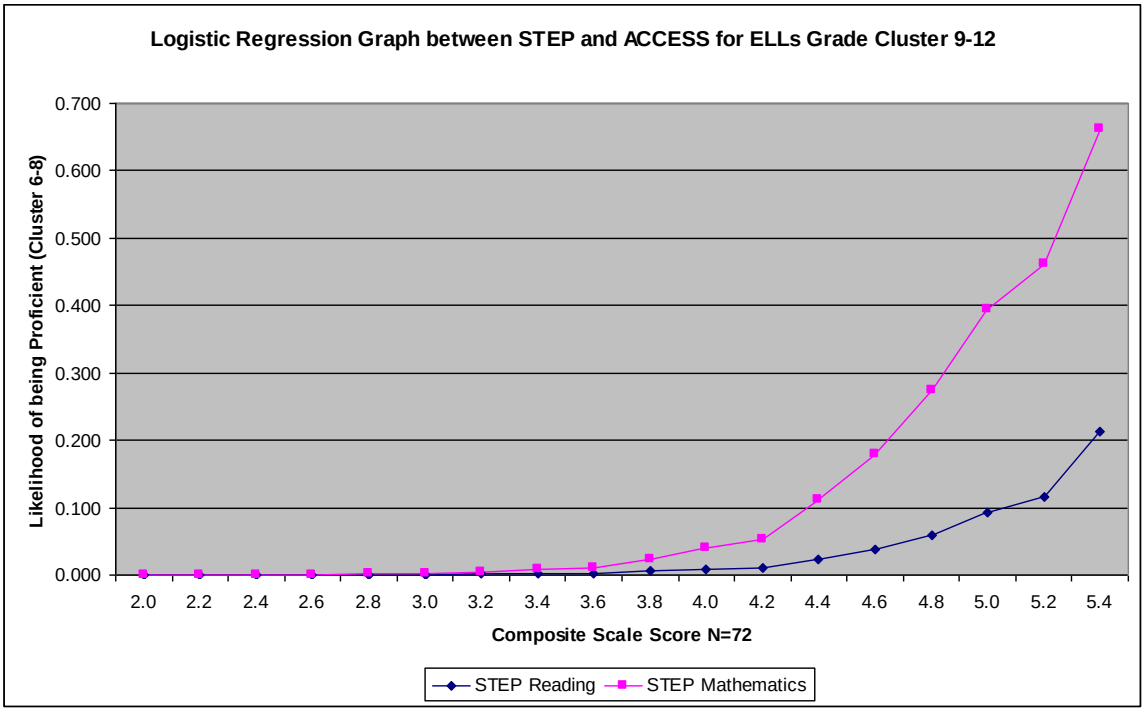


Exhibit 3. Logistic Regression Graph between STEP and ACCESS 9-12 Grade Cluster



The panelists also reviewed a variety of student ACCESS scores from a representative of districts across the state and a set of student profiles, which included composite score and domain scores of students who were assessed with the ACCESS in the 2008-09 school year, to build an overall picture of students identified as LEP in the state.

Second, panelists independently completed a Round One rating with their response to the composite score that should be used to exit students from ESL services (see Appendix C). They were also asked to indicate how confident they were that this was the right composite score to be used for exit purposes and to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with minimum reading / writing score of 4.0 used in combination with the composite score for exited students[1]. Scores were tallied and discussion regarding the distribution of rating was held.

After the discussion, a Round Two rating was independently completed by each panelist (see Appendix D). The panelists were asked again to choose the composite score that should be used to exit students from ESL services. They were also asked to indicate how confident they were that this was the right composite score to be used for exit purposes. Ratings were then tallied.

The rating forms were collected from the panelists and entered into a spreadsheet for the analysis described below.

[1] The SDDOE made a decision to use the literacy score of 4.0 based on information from other WIDA states and consideration of the proficiency descriptors regarding this and adjacent level of performance.

Exit Criteria Analyses and Results

Panelists rated the composite score that should be used to exit students from ESL services. Individual ratings from each panelist in Round One are summarized in Exhibits 4 and 5.

Exhibit 6 represents the responses to the question regarding the use of the conjunctive model score of a level four in domains of reading and writing.

Exhibit 7 and 8, below, present summaries of the Round Two ratings which were completed by participants after a large group discussion of the Round One results.

Exhibit 4. Round One Rating Form Composite Score

Composite Score	Individual Responses	Confidence Level				
		1 Not Confident	2	3	4	5 Very Confident
4.5	1	0	0	1	1	0
4.8	14	0	1	5	6	2
5.0	6	0	0	2	2	2

Exhibit 5. Round One Rating Form Composite Score

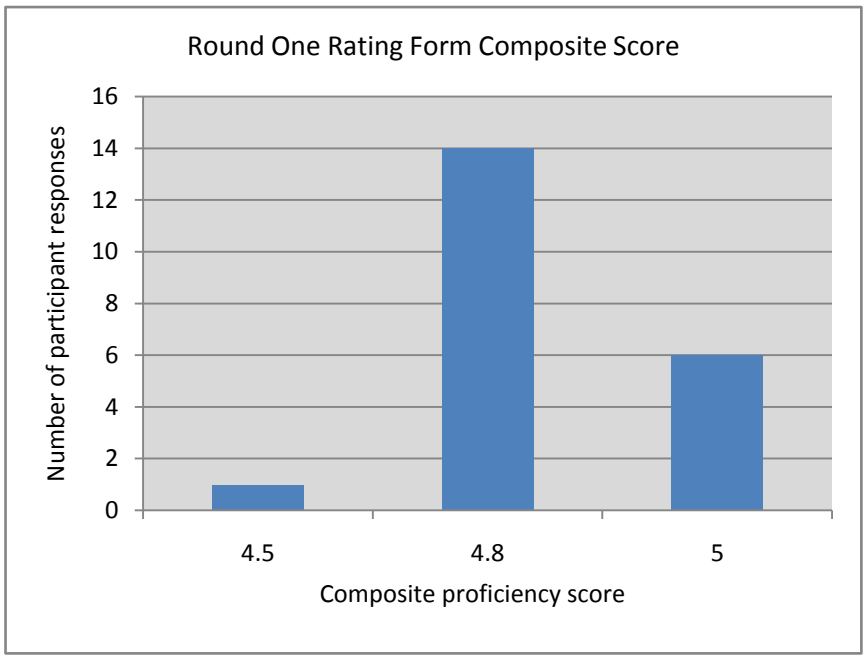


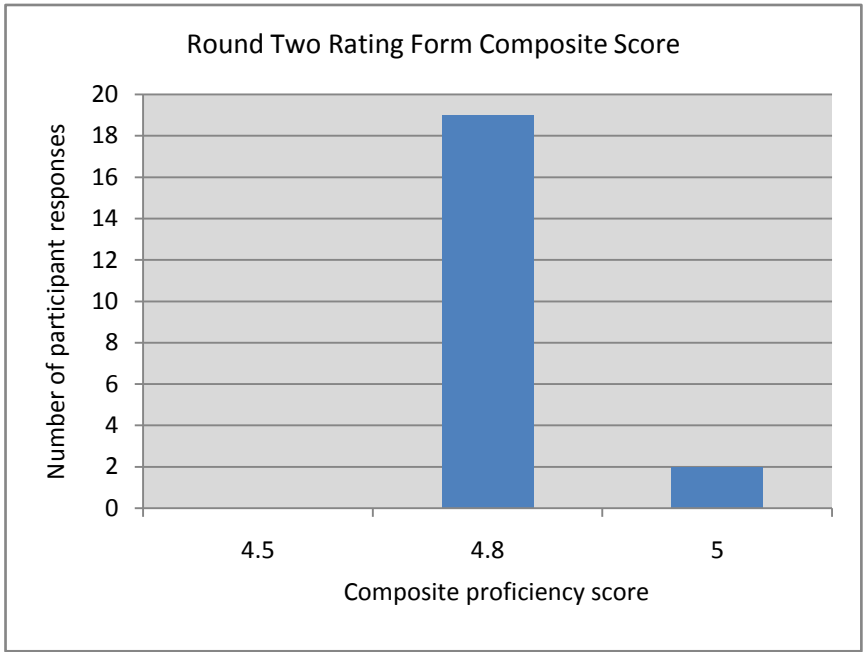
Exhibit 6. Round One Rating Form Conjunctive Model Score

The minimum reading / writing score in combination with a composite score of 4.0 should be used.		Alternative Recommended Score	
		3.5	3.7
Agree	16		
Disagree	5	4	1

Exhibit 7. Round Two Rating Form Composite Score

Composite Score	Individual Responses	Confidence Level				
		1 Not Confident	2	3	4	5 Very Confident
4.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.8	19	0	0	1	8	10
5.0	2	0	0	0	0	2

Exhibit 8. Round Two Rating Form Composite Score



WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test

As part of the enrollment process every school year, all parents must complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) for each of their enrolling children. Any student, who speaks a language other than English, as determined via the HLS, must take the WIDA-ACCESS placement test (W-APT) to determine whether or not a child is in need of English language instructional services. The W-APT is much shorter than the ACCESS, but uses the same score scale.

For the W-APT to be used for identification purposes, a specific score must be identified to separate students into two groups: those who need English language instructional services and those who do not. Other states in the WIDA Consortium that use the W-APT have generally selected an identification score that is higher than the exit score on the ACCESS. Maureen Keithley, Senior Consultant for the WIDA consortium at the University of Wisconsin, noted in an email to the SDDOE that "the W-APT does not hold the same level of reliability as the ACCESS, therefore, the recommendation is to have a slightly higher overall score (composite) for the W-APT LEP identification than for ACCESS LEP exit criteria (e.g., below 5.0 on the W-APT qualifies as LEP / ESL services and 4.8+ on ACCESS LEP exit criteria)." The result, which we encourage the SDDOE to evaluate, may be to reduce the number of false negative; that is, the SDDOE would be less likely to exclude a student who actually needs services from those services.

During the August 10 workshop, panelists discussed which W-APT score would determine whether or not a child is in need of English language instructional services. Once the exit criterion was set at 4.8, the group took the recommendation of the WIDA consortium and set the entrance score on the W-APT as any score below 5.0.

Evaluation Results

At the completion of their participation in the rating process, each panelist was asked to complete an evaluation form addressing their perceptions of the exit criteria standard setting process. All twenty one of the panelists completed the evaluations and their mean responses are provided in Exhibit 9. A four-point response scale was used, where 1 = Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, and 4 = Agree.

As can be seen from the results in Table 14, panelists indicated that the facilities were appropriate to the work, the training and materials were clear, and the rating process was appropriate to the purpose.

Panelists also agreed that the process would yield good recommendation to the South Dakota Department of Education. Panelists were satisfied with their contributions to the study and generally confident about their ratings were reasonable.

Exhibit 9. Summary of Evaluation Responses by Question

Exit Criteria Standard Setting Study	Response Score
I understand the purpose for this meeting.	4.0
The introductory and training materials were clear.	3.9
The process was appropriate to achieving the goal of the meeting.	3.9
The process resulted in a good recommendation to the South Dakota Department of Education.	3.9
I feel like I made a contribution to the discussion.	3.8
The facilities were appropriate to do the work.	3.9

Data represent medians on a scale where 1 = Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, and 4 = Agree.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study addressed the score on the ACCESS that best identifies the level at which English Language learners can meaningfully participate in English only classrooms and, therefore, should be used to exit students from English as a second language services. Overall, the findings support a strong degree of agreement that a score of 4.8 on tier B or C should be used with a score no lower than 4.0 in the sub domain areas of reading and writing.

With regard to the exit criteria results, findings were strong in 90% of the participants in agreement with the 4.8 score. The confidence levels of the participants who choose 4.8 were moderate to strong with all participants confident or very confident with the score.

It is recommended that the SDDOE set the exit score on the ACCESS at 4.8 on tier B or C with a sub domain score no lower than 4.0 in reading and writing.

Appendix A: South Dakota Exit Study Agenda

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Monday, August 10, 2009
Facilitator: Dr. Sara Waring, edCount, LLC

Time	Activity
8:30 to 9:00	Opening remarks, introductions, and description of the meeting purpose
9:00 to 9:30	Description of the process
9:30 to 10:15	Discussion of profiles
10:15 to 10:30	Break
10:30 to noon	Round One ratings
Noon to 1:00	Lunch
1:00 to 1:45	Discussion of Round One recommendations and presentation of impact data
1:45 to 2:15	Round 2 ratings
2:15 to 2:30	Break
2:30 to 3:30	Discussion of Round Two recommendations and presentation of impact data
3:30 to 4:30	Final consensus discussion
4:30	Adjourn

Appendix B: Logistic Regression Likelihood Estimates by Grade Clusters

Logistic Regression Likelihood Estimates Grade Cluster 3-5

Composite Proficiency Levels	Likelihood of being Proficient or Advanced on STEP	
	Reading	Mathematics
1.4	0.009	0.021
1.6	0.012	0.026
1.8	0.016	0.032
2.0	0.020	0.039
2.2	0.027	0.048
2.4	0.035	0.058
2.6	0.046	0.071
2.8	0.059	0.087
3.0	0.076	0.105
3.2	0.098	0.127
3.4	0.126	0.153
3.6	0.159	0.182
3.8	0.200	0.216
4.0	0.247	0.254
4.2	0.302	0.297
4.4	0.363	0.343
4.6	0.429	0.393
4.8	0.497	0.445
5.0	0.566	0.498
5.2	0.632	0.551
5.4	0.693	0.603
5.6	0.749	0.653
5.8	0.797	0.699
6.0	0.838	0.742

Logistic Regression Likelihood Estimates Grade Cluster 6-8

Composite Proficiency Levels	Likelihood of being Proficient or Advanced on STEP	
	Reading	Mathematics
1.8	0.002	0.010
2.0	0.003	0.014
2.2	0.005	0.019
2.4	0.007	0.026
2.6	0.011	0.035
2.8	0.017	0.048
3.0	0.025	0.065
3.2	0.038	0.087
3.4	0.057	0.115
3.6	0.086	0.152
3.8	0.126	0.197
4.0	0.181	0.252
4.2	0.254	0.317
4.4	0.344	0.389
4.6	0.446	0.466
4.8	0.553	0.545
5.0	0.655	0.622
5.2	0.745	0.693
5.4	0.818	0.756
5.6	0.873	0.810
5.8	0.914	0.854
6.0	0.929	0.872

Logistic Regression Likelihood Estimates Grade Cluster 9-12

Composite Proficiency Levels	Likelihood of being Proficient or Advanced on STEP	
	Reading	Mathematics
2.0	0.000	0.000
2.2	0.000	0.000
2.4	0.000	0.000
2.6	0.000	0.001
2.8	0.000	0.001
3.0	0.001	0.002
3.2	0.001	0.005
3.4	0.002	0.008
3.6	0.003	0.010
3.8	0.005	0.023
4.0	0.009	0.040
4.2	0.011	0.052
4.4	0.023	0.111
4.6	0.037	0.178
4.8	0.059	0.273
5.0	0.093	0.394
5.2	0.115	0.462
5.4	0.213	0.662

Appendix C: South Dakota Exit Study: Round One Rating Form

Please respond as indicated below.

Round One	
Please circle the composite score that should be used to exit students from ESL services.	4.5 4.8 5.0
Please indicate how confident you are that this is the right composite score to be used for exit purposes. (1 = not at all confident and 5 = very confident)	1 2 3 4 5
Please circle one of the words to the right to indicate whether you agree or disagree with minimum reading/writing (literacy) score of 4.0 used in combination with the composite score you circled above. If you disagree, please indicate the literacy score you think should be used.	Agree Disagree: _____

Appendix C: South Dakota Exit Study: Round Two Rating Form

Please respond as indicated below.

Round Two					
Please circle the composite score that should be used to exit students from ESL services.	4.5		4.8		5.0
Please indicate how confident you are that this is the right composite score to be used for exit purposes. (1 = not at all confident and 5 = very confident)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: South Dakota Exit Study: Evaluation Form

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Please check the circle that best represents the degree to which you agree with each statement, below.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand the purpose for this meeting.	○	○	○	○
The introductory and training materials were clear.	○	○	○	○
The process was appropriate to achieving the goal of the meeting.	○	○	○	○
The process resulted in a good recommendation to the South Dakota Department of Education.	○	○	○	○
I feel like I made a contribution to the discussion.	○	○	○	○
The facilities were appropriate to do the work.	○	○	○	○

You may provide additional comments below.

Thank you very much for your time and expertise!