

ESSA English Language Learner Work Group
MacKay Building, Pierre, South Dakota
April 20, 2016

The meeting of the ESSA English Language Learner Work Group began at 10:00 a.m. on April 20, 2016, in the MacKay Building, Pierre, South Dakota. The ESSA English Language Learner Work Group was formed to make recommendations to the South Dakota Department of Education pertaining to changes in school accountability in the new reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act known as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

Welcome

SD DOE Secretary Melody Schopp welcomed the members of the group. She gave a brief overview of discussions at the federal level pertaining to interpretation of the new federal law and the writing of the accompanying federal regulations.

Workgroup Membership

Members of the work group present were: Gwyneth Dean-Witte, ESL Consultant and Consultant with ESA 3; Becki Eeten, Sioux Falls School District; Ceci Estes, Belle Fourche School District; Jane Hannemann, Sioux Falls School District; Karen Kindle, University of South Dakota; Megan Moore, Dell Rapids School District; Bev Myer, Leola School District; Missy Slaba, Wagner Community School District; Carla Steffensen, Lake Area Technical Institute; Tanya Vitek, Menno School District; Kerri Whipple, ESL Consultant; Joselyn Schmitz, Huron School District; and Laura Willemsen, Huron School District.

Outline of the Process

Terri Bissonette, consultant for McRel International North Central Comprehensive Center, will act as the facilitator of the group through the summer. She informed the group that three other work groups will be working on various areas of the ESSA Act – School Accountability, Educator Effectiveness, School Improvement. The three work groups working on school improvement, educator effectiveness and English learners, will be making recommendations to the Accountability Work Group. The Accountability Work Group will review all of the information and make final recommendations to the SD Department of Education for use in writing a new State Plan as required by ESSA. As the new State Plan must be implemented for the 2017-2018 school year, the work group recommendations will need to be processed in the late summer/early fall to meet all of the timelines including public comments and a review process by the South Dakota Governor's Office. The plan will be submitted to the US Department of Education in January 2017.

Bissonette explained that the first objective of the day was to understand the background per the state's Flexibility Waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The second objective was to understand the areas where state changes are permitted in the statutes, and the third objective for the day was to formulate recommendations focused on specific aspects of the law and school accountability. Bissonette helped the committee set norms for the meetings.

Overview of ESEA Requirements and Changes under ESSA

Laura Scheibe, SD DOE Accountability Administrator, provided a slide presentation and explanation of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver from the NCLB process that the state has been implementing for the last several years. She outlined the items that have been eliminated, changed and added to the ESSA law.

Work Process

Bissonette led the group through a series of small and large group discussions to consider a number of questions pertaining to the accountability system and English language learners . The results of the group discussions are attached.

Wrap-up

The work group determined that their next meeting date will be set through a survey of the members. More information will be sent to the work group pertaining any of their requests. The work group will also receive information about the discussion of the other work groups prior to the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Results of the Whole Group Discussion

Student achievement must be based on academic assessment

- The group would like to use a student's time in the program and the student's grade level in accountability calculation.
- The group indicated that accountability should be calculated for four years and hold harmless. Students wouldn't be counted unless they were helping the subgroup.
- The group would like to calculate achievement per the following: exempt from testing during the first year in country, second year in country take test and count for participation, third year take test and calculate growth, and during the fourth year take test and calculate proficiency. If this process could not be used, then leave the calculation as it currently stands.
- The group agreed that the ACCESS 2.0 should be the only assessment of achievement. Other types of measures could be; a composite of or time in program/grade level or previous formal education matched with language acquisition.

Exit criteria from the program will need to be changed

- The ACCESS 2.0 test results for proficiency will be the basis for SD DOE's exit criteria
- The WIDA Consortium will set standards during the summer of 2016

Do we need to establish a process for what parent notification is and looks like in SD?

- The group would recommend that guidelines be created for what should be included in the parent notification including:
 - What level their child is at on the ACCESS 2.0 assessment
 - What type of program and services the student is receiving
 - How many service minutes
 - Exit criteria expectation
 - Whether the student is making adequate progress
 - Who is providing services in a language they can understand. Possibly graphs or pictures would work to better demonstrate to the parents their children's progress
 - Provide the information in a variety of ways

Some ELL students who are also SPED students take the ACCESS Alternate test. How do we include this group into accountability?

- Once a student has reached his/her diminished progression, the ELL label would be removed for accountability purposes.
- A team would need to work together to make the determination when and whether that label could be removed in three years.

Topics/Questions to Visit Later

- What number should be used for the ELL cell size? Are there other ways to account for ELLs in low-incidence districts?
- The state must have a definition of a long term ELL student and how to identify the student in Infinite Campus?
- The accountability system needs to be adequate, but not so complicated that it cannot be explained or understood.
- If a district is not held accountable for the progress of ELL students, will the district provide the necessary services?
- The ELL subgroup could put a school in improvement status, if the group is chronically underperforming.
- Questions were asked about monitoring done with any sort of assessment – do the records follow the student. If the student has met the exit criteria and the student moves to a new district, the new school district would monitor the student for the next two years.
- Do the classroom teachers understand the assessment results?
- Only 42 districts had more than 10 identified students. How do we hold the other districts with less than 10 students accountable?
- If a district is not held accountable for the progress of ELL students, will the district provide the necessary services?

Need More Information

- The group would like data on the average length of time an ELL student is in the program.