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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Learning. Leadership. Service.

English Learners in South Dakota:

Identification & Screening Manual

Updated August 2025

Identification & Screening Manual

This manual is designed as a reference to be used in conjunction with the South Dakota Department of Education Title III and EL Assessment websites. This manual provides specific information regarding the identification and screening process of potential English Learners in South Dakota.

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English Learner Definition

In South Dakota, an English learner is classified according to the Federal government definition as described in ESEA Section 3201(5). An English learner student is classified as one:

a) who is aged 3 through 21

b) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;

c) (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;

    (ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of outlying areas; - AND-

        (II) who comes from an environment where language other than English had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; - OR -

    (iii) 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 speaking reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual -

    (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;

    (ii) the ability to achieve successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; - OR -

    (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Must meet either (i), (ii) **or** (iii)

If Part (ii), then must meet both pieces I and II

Must meet either (i), (ii) **or** (iii)

Native American Students:

Please note that the demographic racial category of Native American is not sufficient to satisfy the EL definition. According to the Federal EL definition above, Native American students **must** also meet the second criteria in c. ii. which states, "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."

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The Identification Process

At the beginning of the school year, identification, screening and parental notification of eligible students must be given within **30 calendar days** of enrollment. Once the school year is underway**,** the window for identification, screening and parental notification of eligibility is within **2 weeks** of enrollment.

Home Language Survey

A local school district is required to administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to **ALL** students enrolling in the district as the first step in the screening process to identify students with limited English proficiency. Many districts include this survey in their initial enrollment card or document. Districts are also required to add the HLS to their new student registration packet. Completing the HLS needs to be done only during initial enrollment (not annually). It must be completed one per student, not one per family. The home language survey consists of the following four questions which have been approved by the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights AND the US Department of Justice:

☐ What is the language most frequently spoken at home?

☐ Which language did your child learn when he/she first began to talk?

☐ What language does your child most frequently speak at home?

☐ What language do you most frequently speak to your child?

If any single response indicates a language other than English, school districts are then <u>required to collect more information</u> to determine if the student is an English learner.

If there is no indication that the student speaks another language from the home language survey, there are other indicators that can be used to initiate the administration of the WIDA Screener. These indicators may include but are not limited to: documented staff concerns based on classroom observations, performance, or if the student was receiving English language development services in another state**.**

LEAs need to explicitly communicate with parents that the HLS is used solely to offer appropriate educational services, not for determining legal status or for immigration purposes. If the LEA believes that the data provided was inaccurate, the LEA may contact the parent/guardian for further clarification regarding the information provided on the HLS. If the information is inaccurate the LEA will make the appropriate changes by initialing and dating the document.

A copy of the HLS is part of a student's cumulative record and should be kept on file.

A sample of the home language survey can be found in **Appendix A**.

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Screening for English Language Proficiency

After a LEA has administered the home language survey, the next step in the identification process is to determine if the student meets the EL definition. The HLS is a tool to help LEAs identify potential students for assessment of language proficiency and English language development program placement. There are certain things to consider when a new student is enrolling in the LEA.

- Does the student have available records that may be used to help determine whether the student has demonstrated "the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English"?

- Students' cumulative folders should also be examined to determine whether the student was previously identified and was receiving English language development services.

- If the student came from another WIDA state and has a WIDA proficiency level from an assessment within the last calendar year, then the receiving district does not need to administer the screening assessment and may use that information to determine program eligibility.

- If the student comes from a **non-WIDA** state, those scores may not be used to determine EL program eligibility.

- If the student had previously been identified in another district or WIDA state, then the student should be placed in the district's English language development program.

Initial Assessment

Once the student has been identified as potential English Learner through the HLS, a review of the EL definition, and a conversation with parents/guardians (as needed) the next step in the identification process is to assess for English Proficiency utilizing the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) screener tools.

South Dakota LEAs will administer the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Online Screener for Grades 1-12, and WIDA Alternate Screener developed by World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). These Screeners identify a student as an English Learner.

**Educators will need to complete the appropriate screening assessment in the WIDA Secure Portal on an <u>annual</u> basis. Scores will be accepted beginning July 1st for the upcoming school year.

The chart below indicates the WIDA screeners provided to SD LEA's. The chart provides information regarding assessment administration procedures, where to locate materials and who to contact for more information at the state level.

Overview of Screener assessments available:

Grade	Screener Assessment
Kindergarten **1st semester** (listening & speaking only) **2nd semester:** (listening, speaking, reading, writing)	**WIDA Screener for Kindergarten (paper-based)** ☐ Free and downloadable at: www.wida.us ☐ Testing kit can be ordered - contact Shari Lord ☐ Administered 1-on-1 ☐ Test administrator scores ALL domains that are administered to the student
1st grade	
First Semester 1st grade: KG screener (4 domains, paper)	
Second Semester 1st grade: (4 domains, online)	**WIDA Online Screener** ☐ Free online ☐ Administered through the INSIGHT Browser in conjunction with WIDA AMS ☐ Test administrators score both the Speaking and Writing domains
2nd grade- 12th grade: (4 domains, online) *Remember: writing for grades 1-3 is on paper*	
Kindergarten-12th grade (4 domains, paper)	**WIDA Alternate Screener** ☐ Free and downloadable at: www.wida.us ☐ Administered 1-on-1 ☐ Test administrator scores ALL domains that are administered to the student

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and Entrance Criteria

Students in the first semester of KG will only be administered the Listening and Speaking domains of the KG Screener. The listening and speaking domains are only administered to first semester KG students due to not having exposure to reading and writing instruction. For students in the first semester of their first year in a grade-level cluster, WIDA recommends the option of administering the lower grade cluster form. See chart below.

WIDA Screener
Off-Grade Clustering

For students in the first semester of the first year in a grade-level cluster, WIDA recommends the option of administering the lower grade cluster form.

Grade	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12	
Semester	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Grade-Cluster Form	K (all domains)	Grade 1 Test		Grades 2-3 Test				Grades 4-5 Test				Grades 6-8 Test						Grades 9-12 Test						

Refer to the flowchart on following page to find KG identification criteria.

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten:
1ˢᵗ semester only

Listening

Speaking

Oral Language Proficiency Level
(50% Listening + 50% Speaking)

1.0-4.5	5.0-5.5	6.0

Student qualifies for English Language Development (ELD) services

Student does not qualify for ELD services

Student does not qualify for ELD services

Send notification of program eligibility letter to parents/guardians

Student will be monitored for 2 years in the event additional support is needed in the future

DO NOT identify as EL in IC

Enter information in Infinite Campus (IC) to identify student as EL

Create monitoring document for student

ELD services begin

DO NOT identify as EL in IC

WIDA Screener for Kindergarten:
2nd semester of Kindergarten
1st semester of 1st grade

Listening	Speaking	Writing	Reading

Overall Proficiency Level
35% Reading + 35% Writing + 15% Listening + 15% Speaking

1.0-4.5

Student qualifies for English Language Development (ELD) services

Send notification of program eligibility letter to parents/guardians

Enter information in Infinite Campus (IC) to identify student as EL

ELD services begin

5.0-5.5

Student does not qualify for ELD services

Student will be monitored for 2 years in the event additional support is needed in the future

Create monitoring document for student

DO NOT identify as EL in IC

6.0

Student does not qualify for ELD services

DO NOT identify as EL in IC

Entrance Criteria:

Grades Second Semester 1ˢᵗ Grade through 12ᵗʰ criteria:

> Students with a composite score lower than **5.0** on WIDA Online Screener will be deemed eligible for EL services.

> Question: What do I need to do after I have screened the student and the student is deemed eligible for services?

- o The WIDA Screener for Kindergarten and the WIDA Online Screener assessment results/scores need to be placed in the student's cumulative file
- o Students must be identified as EL in Infinite Campus
- o All students who are deemed eligible for EL services must be placed in the district's "effective" EL Core Program in accordance with Lau vs. Nichols (1974)
- o The district must notify parents of student's identification as an EL and placement in the EL program using the sample EL Parent Notification form.

WIDA Online Screener

Quick Facts on WIDA Online Screener:

- ☐ Administered online
- ☐ Can be administered in a group setting
- ☐ Technology requirements are the same as ACCESS for ELLs 2.0
- ☐ Speaking and Writing domains are locally scored
  For detailed information on the WIDA Online Screener, please visit:
  WIDA Online Screener
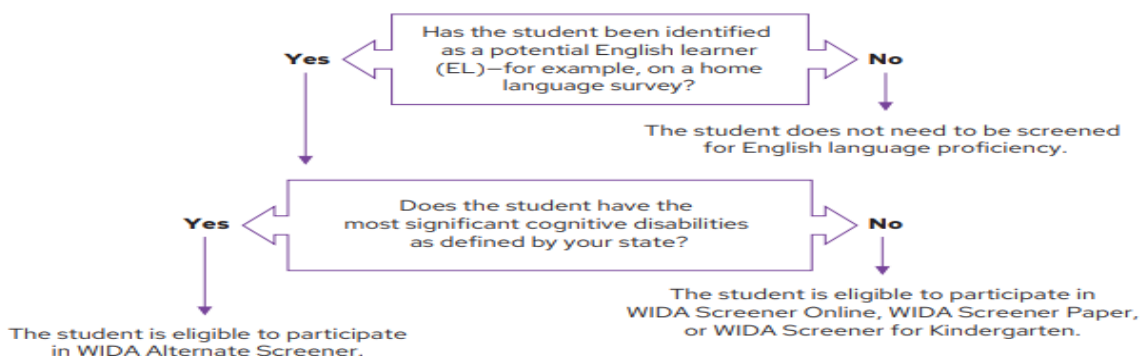
WIDA Alternate Screener

Getting started

Keep in mind that WIDA Alternate Screener
- Is given to new students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K–12
- Helps educators identify if students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are English learners
- Can be administered at any time during the school year
- Takes no more than 30 minutes total testing time (there are a total of nine test items)
- Reports proficiency level scores for each language domain and for four composite scores: Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, and Overall

WIDA Alternate Screener Decision Tree:

Assessment participation decisions must be made by the IEP team, not an individual. Check with your state education agency on specific criteria for identifying potential ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

What If:
- Potential EL student already comes with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that has determined Alternate Assessment Participation?
  - Review the Assessment document in the IEP:
    1. Use the current IEP information.
    2. Ensure the student's Infinite Campus Enrollment Special Ed Field has "Participates in Alt Assessment" marked.
    3. Administer the WIDA Alternate Screener.

- Potential EL student does not come with an IEP that determines Alternate Participation?
  - Consider the following:
    - Is the district initiating a current special education evaluation with a suspected disability category of Cognitive Disability
    - Historical evidence
    - Cognitive/ability evaluations
    - Adaptative behavior evaluation
    - Academic/Achievement evaluations
    - Informal assessments
    - Does the student require extensive instruction and support to acquire and maintain skills
    - Does the student learn through alternate academic achievement standards
  - If the above considerations indicate that the student has a significant cognitive disability:
    1. Contact Shari.Lord@state.sd.us if questions around alternate screener participation.
    2. Administer the WIDA Alternate Screener.

Please note evidence for determining alternate assessment participation is NOT based on the following:
- Specific disability category such as Cognitive or Autism
- Percent of time in specialized services
- Educational placement or instructional setting
- Low reading or achievement level
- Need for accommodations or assistive technology on the regular assessment
- Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress
- Expected poor performance on regular assessment
- Impact of student scores on accountability system
- Administrator decision
- Poor attendance
- Extended absences

WIDA Screener Training Requirements

Below you will find the required trainings for test administrators who will be administering the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Screener Online Grades 1-12 and WIDA Alternate Screener. All test administrators of the WIDA Screeners KG-12 **MUST BE CERTIFIED EDUCATORS AND COMPLETED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.**

What training is required?

If you are administering WIDA Screener for Kindergarten
Complete WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Administration and Scoring found in the Canvas Course WIDA Secure portal
Complete the following quizzes: - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Oral Language (12/15) - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Literacy (8/10) Test administrators will need to pass each quiz with an 80% or higher.

If you are administering the WIDA Screener for Grades 1-12
Complete the following Canvas Courses in the WIDA Secure Portal based on the grade level that you will screen: - Speaking Grades 1-5: Scoring Access paper and WIDA Screener - Speaking Grades 6-12: Scoring Access paper and WIDA Screener - Writing Grades 1-5: Scoring WIDA Screener - Writing Grades 6-12: Scoring WIDA Screener - WIDA Screener Online: Administration Test administrators will need to pass each quiz with an 80% or higher.

If you are administering WIDA Alternate Screener (New)
Complete WIDA Alternate Screener: Administration and Scoring found in the Canvas Course WIDA Secure portal
Complete the following quizzes: - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Oral Language (12/15) - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten: Literacy (8/10) Test administrators will need to pass each quiz with an 80% or higher.

Training courses and quizzes can be found in the WIDA Secure Portal . If you do not have a WIDA Secure Portal account, please contact the SD DOE Assessment office at doeassessment@state.sd.us.

Program Placement

School systems and educators have the legal responsibility to meet the academic and linguistic needs of English learners. They also have the educational responsibility of ensuring that every child can achieve the level of knowledge and skills they need to be successful. The school must provide sufficiently qualified human resources and appropriate programs and methodologies which will ensure the learning of English and the curriculum to the same extent as native English-speaking students. The school must evaluate the program to verify that it is providing effective instruction that is appropriate for ELs and may be different than what is provided to native English-speaking students. Examples of EL programming can be found here.

Parent Notification Letter:

LEAs are required to notify parents of EL students of their child's placement, continuation, or exit from the EL program. If the student meets South Dakota's entrance criteria and is deemed eligible for EL services, parents must be notified **_annually_**. The parent notification letter must be provided, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents can understand (ESEA Section 1112(e)(4)). The letter must indicate that their child was identified as needing specific English language development services and tell how the district will address those needs with English language development services.

parents have the right to deny services; however, students are still **required to participate in screening and in the annual ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 until they meet SD exit criteria.

The parent notification letter must consist of the following 8 components:

Title I & Title III Requirements for Parental Notification (ESEA Section 1112(e)(3))
Parents must be informed annually regarding their child's placement in the LEA's EL core program within 30 days at the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of placement in the program for students who enroll during the school year. The parent notification letter must include the following 8 components:
Reason for EL identification   **The child's level of English proficiency, how such level was assessed, and the status of the child's academic achievement**   **Type of EL program the child is being placed into and other EL program options**   **How the program will meet the educational needs of the child**   **Exit requirements, expected graduation rate, and expected rate of transition to a classroom not tailored for EL students**   **If the student is a student with a disability, how the EL program meets the goals of the child's IEP**   **Information for parents on how to withdraw their child from the district EL program or to choose another program or method of instruction**   **Parents right to deny services**

A sample letter for parental notification is shown in Appendix B.

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Parental Waiver of EL Services

LEAs are required to inform parents/guardians of their right to deny EL services, however a parent's decision must be voluntary (ESEA 1112(e)(3)(A)(viii). An LEA may not recommend that a parent denies services within a program for any reason. The LEA should discuss with the parents/guardians the benefits of EL instruction and address any concerns or misconceptions they may have.

Students whose parent's waived services are still required to be assessed for annual English language proficiency along with ALL district ELs (ESEA Section 1111(b)(2)(G). The school district must determine how to meet the language development needs of the student and how they can be addressed outside of the ELD program.

Question: Parents have waived EL services, what do I do?

Things to think about…

- ○ Has the LEA discussed the benefits of EL instruction?
- ○ Has the LEA addressed any misconceptions or concerns regarding the EL services?
- ○ Has the LEA made it clear to the parent/guardian that parental waiver of EL services **does not exempt** the child from annual ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment or the removal of any EL designation?
- ○ Has the parent/guardian completed and signed the waiver of services form?

To ensure that parents have the opportunity to change their mind regarding EL services, the LEA must ***annually*** ask the parents to complete a parental waiver of services and store the completed form(s) in the student's cumulative folder.

Scenarios

Question: I have a student whose parent/guardian answered "English" on all four Home Language Survey questions. A few weeks into the school year, the student revealed to Miss Johnson that he speaks Spanish "all the time, at home." What do I do?

What to do…

1. Contact the student's parent/guardian to determine how the language affects the child
2. Review the information in the student's cumulative folder
3. Collect teacher input from the teachers that are working with the student
4. Document when the student indicated that there was another language other than English in the home

After following the above steps choose which option applies:

i. There are no academic concerns regarding the student- The LEA will monitor the student to ensure that the language other than English is not impacting the student's ability to access instruction that is delivered in English.

ii. A team has met to ensure that the concerns are linguistic in nature and not attendance, attention or behavioral concerns manifested as academic concerns. Student has academic concerns- The LEA will screen for English language proficiency.

Question: I have a student who was misidentified as EL. The parent/guardian indicated that the Home Language Survey was filled out incorrectly. The child is only exposed to another language through television programming. What is the process to remove the EL designation?

What is the process…?

i. Document the situation and have parent/guardian sign and date
ii. Contact SD DOE explaining the situation
iii. Provide the following documentation to SD DOE:
   - Email explaining the situation
   - Proof of parent/guardian signature and date
   - Completed Home language survey amendment form

Appendix A
<u>Home Language Survey (Sample)</u>

Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are required to identify possible English Learners (ELs) during enrollment. This Home Language Survey (HLS) is used as a tool to determine if your child is eligible for language support services. If a language other than English is used by you or your child and your child meets the English Learner (EL) definition, the school may give your child an English Language Proficiency assessment. The school will share the results of the assessment with you.

Student Information	
First Name:	Date of Birth:
Last Name:	School Name:

Questions for Parents or Guardians	Response
What is the language most frequently spoken at home?	
What language did your child learn when he/she began to talk?	
Which language does your child most frequently speak at home?	
Which language do you most frequently speak to your child?	

Parent Preferences	
In what language would you prefer to get information from school?	

Parent/Guardian's Signature:_____ Date:_____

English Learning Program (EL)
202x-xx

Notification of Program Eligibility: (Entrance / Continuation / Exit) (circle one)

School:_____ Date Enrolled:_____ Date Identified:_____

Dear Parent/Guardian of: _____,

According to information you provided on the Home Language survey along with an English language proficiency assessment, your child:
- ☐ Is identified and eligible for EL services.
- ☐ Is qualified to continue EL services.
- ☐ Does not qualify for EL services because…
  - ☐ The student was formerly an English learner and is now English proficient. The student reads, speaks, and comprehends English in academic classroom settings. The student has exited from the EL program and will be monitored for continued academic success for 2 years.
  - ☐ The student was never classified as an English learner and does not fit the definition of an English learner outlined in state or federal law.

In XX Schools, Title III/EL Program eligibility is determined by Language Proficiency, which is assessed on a **scale of 1-6**. On the English language proficiency test, **your child tested at a level** _____ on the **ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, WIDA Screener (circle the assessment type)**

Below is an explanation of the levels.

English Language Proficiency Levels (grades K-12)

Level A1	Initiating	The student can imitate sounds and respond to familiar voices.
Level A2	Exploring	The student can approximate routinely practiced words and respond to routinely practiced oral cues.
Level A3	Engaging	The student can approximate words and phrases and can respond to an idea within familiar language.
Level 1	Entering	The student knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support.
Level 2	Emerging	The student knows and uses some social English and general academic language with visual support.
Level 3	Developing	The student knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support.
Level 4	Expanding	The student knows and uses social English and some technical academic language.
Level 5	Bridging	The student knows and uses social and academic language working with grade level material.
Level 6	Reaching	The student knows and uses social and academic language at the highest level measured by this test.

To exit from the EL program, ELs will have reached the minimum level of a **5.0** Overall Composite Proficiency Level on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test, or obtained a **4.0** on ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 **AND** a level **3** or **4** on the **ELA SD State Assessment**. It can take up to 5 or 6 years to exit the EL program. The high school completion rate and on time graduation rates for SD schools can be found at https://sdschools.sd.gov/#!/home

The school offers the following programs to help your child develop English language proficiency. A description of these program models can be found on the back side of this letter. Based on your child's language development needs, the recommended program model for your child is:

Pull-out language support   Push-in language support   Sheltered Instruction   Other(s) _____

This program will help meet your child's language development needs by assisting your child with English language development services in order for your child to meet the grade level content standards in the mainstream classroom and help your child complete high school.

A Language Acquisition Plan (LAP) will be written to address your child's specific strengths and needs:

_____   _____   _____
EL Teacher Name   EL Teacher Phone Number   Date

☐ LAP is Attached (entrance or continuation) ☐ LAP will be written (entrance or continuation)
☐ Not applicable – student does not qualify ☐ Not applicable – student is exiting

If your child also qualifies for Special Education services, the EL teacher will be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team in order to ensure that the EL programming is working to help meet the objectives of the IEP.

Parents/guardians have the right to decline **services** or choose a different program model offered by the district, but annual language proficiency **assessment** remains a district responsibility. If services are declined, a LAP is written to address the student's linguistic needs in the regular education setting. The EL decline of services form must be signed, dated, and returned to the school.

If you need more information regarding the EL program and services, contact:

Program Model Type	Focus	Students	Delivery	Staff
Transitional Bilingual or Early-Exit Bilingual Education	Develop literacy in English while developing some literacy skills in the native language	ELs with same native language	Instruction is delivered in both languages – instruction may be heavier in native language in early grades and transition to mostly English in later grade levels	Bilingual Teacher
Dual Language or Two-way Immersion	Develop literacy in the native language and in English	ELs with common native language and native English speakers who want to learn that language	Instruction is delivered in both languages	Bilingual Teacher
ELD (English Language Development)	Develop English language proficiency	EL students and possibly other native English-speaking students who need assistance with academic English	Instruction using ELD standards to teach English (students may use native language supports)	EL Teacher
Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support	Develop English language proficiency and content knowledge	ELs and can include native English speakers	Instruction uses rigorous content standards, English Language Development standards and specific strategies and techniques to teach English and content together	EL Teacher
Newcomer Program	Develop beginning English language skills, introduce core academic skills and provide support for acculturation to the US and school	New ELs to the US educational system with an entry level of English language proficiency or EL students with Severely Interrupted Formal Education	Instruction is delivered in English with native language support from Bilingual staff and peers when possible – units designed for students to succeed in US schools and transition students to regular classrooms within a year	EL Teacher
Other – Push-in EL	Develop English language proficiency	EL students and possibly other native English-speaking students who need assistance with academic English	Instruction in English using co-teaching and planning to make the lesson comprehensible, provide additional language support within the classroom related to the	Bilingual or EL Teacher

_____   _____   _____

			mainstream lesson or bilingual staff may provide native language support in the mainstream classroom	
Other – Extended Instructional Day	Focus varies, based on student needs	ELs	Instruction is delivered outside of the regular instructional school day	Bilingual or EL Teacher