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Memorandum:

To: District & Charter School Title III Directors
From: Nevada Department of Education – Services for English Learners
Date: November 7, 2017
RE: Nevada English Learner Exit Criteria

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to establish and implement, with timely and meaningful consultation with local education agencies representing the geographical diversity of the state, statewide entrance and exit procedures. When the ESSA State Plan was developed, Nevada included the English learner (EL) Exit Criteria that was in place at that time: Composite score of 5.0 and Literacy sub-score of 5.0 on the WIDA assessment.

In 2016, WIDA conducted a standard-setting process to more closely align English language proficiency expectations with the more rigorous content standards that states have adopted. In general, English learners in WIDA Consortium states achieved lower levels of proficiency in 2017 based on the new, more rigorous language expectations that are reflected in the WIDA English language proficiency levels.

Recognizing the potential impact on English learner WIDA proficiency scores, the Nevada Department of Education conducted an analysis that compared 2017 WIDA proficiency scores with 2017 SBAC English Language Arts (SBAC ELA) and Mathematics (SBAC Math) scores. The purpose of the analysis was to determine the relationship between specific English language proficiency scores and proficiency on state content assessments. The analysis found that English learners who achieve a WIDA Composite score of 4.5 or higher achieve proficiency on the SBAC ELA and SBAC Math assessments at a rate similar to Non-EL students.

The Nevada Department of Education convened four stakeholder meetings (LEA Title III Directors, English Mastery Council, ESSA English Learner Work Group, and Nevada Association of School Superintendents) at which the results of the WIDA/SBAC analysis were shared and recommendations discussed.

On October 12, 2017, the Nevada State Board of Education received and approved recommendations related to new Statewide English Learner Reclassification Procedures. The new EL Exit Criteria is a Composite score of 4.5 on the WIDA assessment.

The State Board of Education also approved the following recommendations related to the EL Exit Criteria:

1. NDE should review the WIDA/SBAC data at least every 2 years to ensure that the state still has the “right EL Exit Criteria.”
2. NDE should develop a clear Communication Plan to explain the change in EL Exit Criteria to stakeholders.
3. Nevada should include the protocol that would provide an alternative pathway to reclassification besides WIDA Composite score of 4.5.
4. NDE should make the WIDA 4.5 EL Exit Criteria retroactive for the 2016-17 school year.

In response to recommendation #3 above, the State Board of Education approved a procedure through which local education agencies (LEAs) could, on an individual basis, consider additional English learners for reclassification who did not meet the minimum EL Exit Criteria, as measured by the WIDA assessment.

The proposed procedure would allow LEAs to consider additional lines of evidence that demonstrate that the English learners has developed sufficient English language and to fully access rigorous academic content without supplemental English learner services. This procedure would include at a minimum:

- A team approach that includes the parent/guardian;
- A WIDA ACCESS overall Composite proficiency score of at least 4.0;
- A passing score on state content assessments in ELA and Math; and
- Other documented evidence to demonstrate that the English learners is successfully accessing rigorous academic content and is on track to meet graduation requirements without continued EL program services.

The Nevada Department of Education has scheduled a webinar for Wednesday, November 15th at 10:00 AM that will provide additional training to local education agencies on the use of specific tools required for this option:

- Reclassification Protocol (8c): Content Proficient Protocol; and
- Tool 8: Monitoring English Learner Progress in Core Content Areas

If local education agencies utilize the alternative reclassification procedure outlined above, that process must be completed by January 8, 2018 (which is before the start of the 2017-18 WIDA assessment window). NDE will provide specific guidance on how LEAs are to annually report the number of English learners that are reclassified under the alternative reclassification procedure.

2017-18 Annual WIDA Assessments

With the State Board decision to make the EL Exit Criteria retroactive to the 2016-17 school year, local education agencies will need to identify which English learners met the new EL Exit Criteria (WIDA Composite score of 4.5) on the spring 2017 WIDA assessment and reclassify them. As a result of the new EL Exit Criteria, English learners who have been retroactively reclassified based on the 2017 WIDA assessment, should not be assessed on the 2017-18 WIDA assessment. Please note that the Pre-ID files submitted for the 2017-18 WIDA assessment did not exclude those students.

LEAs will need to take necessary steps to avoid WIDA participation of reclassified English learners.