



Illinois State Board of Education

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James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

June 16, 2017

Dear English Learner Program Director:

President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law on December 10, 2015. ISBE worked with stakeholders during 2016 and early 2017 to create the required state plan and submitted it to the U.S. Department of Education in April 2017. ISBE identified various commitments to further deliberate with our stakeholders. One of these commitments is to receive a recommendation from stakeholders on a new reclassification score on ACCESS 2.0 no later than June 30, 2017. This commitment was predicated upon two factors. First, ESSA requires that each state identify a uniform exit procedure and second, that the ACCESS assessment was revised and was administered in the 2016-17 school year.

ISBE has received a wide range of recommendations from school and district leaders to consider regarding a uniform exit procedure. The Illinois Advisory Council of Bilingual Education (IACBE) is identified in statute as the group that makes recommendations to ISBE on topics and issues germane to English learner (EL) teaching and learning. Practicing teachers, principals, and superintendents, all of whom possess EL expertise, make up the IACBE membership.

IACBE recommended a composite score of 4.8 on the ACCESS for a student to exit English Learner classification status retroactive to 2016-17 school year. IACBE made its recommendation after reviewing extensive data from ISBE that showed that English Learners with ACCESS composite scores of 4.8 and above performed nearly as well on content performance as students who were not ELs. ISBE is adopting this recommendation.

ACCESS 2.0 was recalibrated to better align with college-and-career readiness standards. ISBE recognizes that modifying the required composite score for exiting English Learners will have a different impact for each district. More specifically, this change could affect the delivery of programming and staffing.

ISBE is committed to assisting school districts with implementation concerns; additional resource information will be forthcoming, including guidance for initial screening. ISBE will closely monitor and review all ESSA implementation and review data to inform adjustments as necessary. As stated previously, we understand that this change will have a different impact for each district in Illinois and invite you to contact me at jhelfer@isbe.net or 217-782-4123 or DELL staff, to share your concerns and suggestions.

Very truly yours,

Jason Helfer, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning