

English Learner Frequently Asked Questions

For more information, consult DEED's [EL Student Identification, Assessment & Data Reporting Guide](#).

1. Should my district/school give out a Home Language Survey (HLS) to every new student who enrolls?

No. The HLS is a document that should only be filled out **once** in a student's educational career. If the student is enrolling in an Alaska district/school for the first time ever, then a HLS should be given to complete. Alaska does not accept a HLS from outside of Alaska. If the student is enrolling in your district/school from another district within Alaska, then the **original HLS** must be obtained. If an EL transfers from another Alaskan school district, then the student's EL status, ELP assessment results and other records related to their EL status should follow the student to the new district. If you are unsure whether the student was identified as an EL elsewhere in Alaska and are unable to get that information from the sending district, you may contact the Federal Programs Education Associate at 907-465-2884.

2. Our district/school has administered the HLS to a student enrolling in school for the first time. The parents have indicated a language other than English. What happens next?

If a language other than English has been indicated on the HLS, the district should first verify the student meets the first part of the definition (A-C) of an English learner. This can be accomplished through contacting the family, administering a Language Observation Checklist, and/or reviewing other relevant documentation/information. If appropriate, the WIDA Screener for Kindergarten, WIDA Screener, or WIDA MODEL should be administered to determine the student's language proficiency

3. A parent marked both English AND another language for one or more of the responses- What should we do?

If the parent marked multiple languages for one or more of the responses, it is important first to ensure that the HLS was explained properly to the parent. If the parent was aware of the purpose of the HLS, and the student meets the first part of the definition (A-C) of an English learner, then proceed with screening as though a language other than English was indicated on the form. *See question 2 above for more information.*

4. A parent marked a language other than English on the HLS, but now would like to re-complete the survey so that it indicates all "English". Can the HLS be re-completed?

No. The HLS is a document that should only ever be filled out once. Parents cannot "go back" and change their original answers that they indicated. It is important that a district/school properly explain the purpose of the HLS to ensure that parents are aware of what occurs when a language other than English is marked.

5. After administering the HLS and approved screener assessment, a student was identified as an English learner. The parent is upset about the designation and would like the designation removed. What do we do?

To avoid this situation, it is important that the HLS be explained thoroughly prior to completion. However, districts have an obligation to identify students who may need language assistance programs. In this circumstance, parents have a right to remove their child from English language development programs and may also refuse ACCESS testing (although district/school staff should never encourage a parent to do so). The designation cannot be removed unless it is determined by DEED, on a case-by-case basis, that appropriate steps to identification were not followed and the student does not meet the definition or requirements of an English learner.

6. I gave the student the screener assessment and they scored as fluent. Is there anything further that I need to do?

Yes. If the student scored at or above the minimum score for English language proficiency on the screener assessment, they are not identified as EL and are not required to be assessed further. However, a record of the student's screener scores, and HLS should be kept in the student's file. If a student in KG is screened prior to March 1 and is proficient in the Oral Composite score, they are not identified as an EL at that time. However, after March 31, they must be given the full screener OR the LOC-A. If they score proficient again, they are not identified as an EL and are not required to be assessed further. However, screener scores and completed LOC-A should be kept in the student's file.

7. A parent marked only English on the HLS, but we suspect that another language may have had a significant impact on the student's English proficiency. What do we do?

In addition to further discussions with the parent(s), the Language Observation Checklist (LOC-A, Appendix E of the [EL Student Identification, Assessment & Data Reporting Guide](#)) may be utilized in this circumstance to determine if a screener assessment is appropriate for this child. If a LOC-A is used, it should be kept in the student's cumulative file for future reference.

8. Our district/school received a student from outside of Alaska who was an English learner in their prior state. Should we retain their previous English learner status?

No. Each state sets their own entrance and exit procedures for English learners; therefore, a student's prior EL status in a state other than Alaska should not be considered. A new HLS should be administered and the identification process for new students should be followed. However, if a student was identified as an EL in another district/school **within Alaska**, their EL status must be retained. This includes students who began school in Alaska, moved out of state, and returned to Alaska.

9. If we have documentation of a student's WIDA ACCESS scores from the previous Alaska school, should we still give the student a screener assessment?

No. If you have documentation from the previous school year indicating the student's WIDA ACCESS scores, you do not have to administer the screener assessment. Instead, the district/school should use the results of the student's WIDA ACCESS to appropriately place the student into an English language development program.

10. Our HLS is currently in our registration packet. Should it be there?

Although this is at the discretion of the district, it is recommended that the HLS be thoroughly explained in purpose to the parents. Additionally, the HLS should only ever be administered once so it should not be available in a packet that a parent fills out each year.

11. What is the school's responsibility when an English learner leaves our school?

When an English learner transfers, it is your district/school's responsibility to ensure that the documents listed in Appendix A of the [EL Student Identification, Assessment & Data Reporting Guide](#) are included in the student's cumulative folder. In addition to those items listed, the following documents should also be included for all identified English learners:

- Home Language Survey,
- Language Observation Checklists (if applicable),
- Screener results,
- Copies of the initial and continuing Parent Notification Letters,
- A copy of the student's WIDA ACCESS for ELLs individual student report,
- Exiting/Monitoring documents for students in the four-year monitoring period (if applicable), and
- Copy of a parent's refusal of services (if applicable).

12. Should the HLS be kept in a student's cumulative folder if the parent answered English to all questions?

Yes. The HLS should be kept in every student's cumulative folder. Section 1111 (b)(2)(F)(i) of the ESEA states: "Each State plan shall identify the languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population of the State..." The HLS has been adopted by the State of Alaska as part of our statewide entrance procedures for determining those students who speak a language(s) other than English. It is important that this document is retained as proof that a district/school has identified any student who speaks a language other than English. Additionally, if a student transfers from one school to another within Alaska, the receiving school is required to use the original HLS to determine placement in an English language development program.

13. How long should an HLS, and other EL-related documents, be kept in a student's cumulative folder?

Refer to your district-specific records retention policies and schedules. It is strongly recommended by DEED that these documents be maintained in student cumulative folders until the student completes their K-12 academic career in the event the student transfers out of district or there are EL identification issues that arise. However, at a minimum, districts should follow their own policies and schedules.

14. What are the reporting requirements for ACCESS score reports?

Following Alaska regulation 4 AAC 06.738, districts must distribute score reports on/before a day determined by the commissioner each year. **Note:** Annual parent notifications are required to include the student's current level of English proficiency and may need to be sent out prior to the commissioner-determined assessment reporting day.

15. We have a recently arrived immigrant student. How do we proceed?

An immigrant student *may or may not* be an English learner. Districts should follow the same procedures for recently arrived immigrants as they would any student enrolling for the first time to determine if the student may be an English learner: have the parents complete a HLS, and advance to screening if the HLS (and/or Language Observation Checklist, family interview, other relevant evidence, if applicable) indicates a need. Immigrant students, regardless of EL status, should be coded in the OASIS data collections as such for three years after the student's arrival in the US. The U.S. Department of Education has produced a [Newcomer Toolkit](#)¹ that may be helpful to districts/schools as they serve newcomer students (whether they are ELs or not). *For information regarding state content assessments and Recently Arrived English Learners, see Appendix A and State Assessments – Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs) of the [EL Student Identification, Assessment & Data Reporting Guide](#).*

16. We have a student who exited EL status but has since been re-identified. How do we code the student in OASIS data collections?

If a former EL is re-identified during a school year, enter a code of LP in the Summer OASIS data collection (and Fall OASIS and P-Rate, if re-identified prior to submitting) and ensure that a comment is entered in the 'Notes' field that the student has been re-identified as an EL through use of the screener assessment.

¹ nces.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/NewcomerToolkit-06222023-508_OELA.pdf