

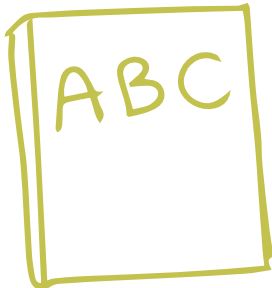


English Learner Assessments: Key Terms

This glossary defines terms used frequently in conversations about K-12 education in the United States. It is designed to help families and community members understand the assessments English Learners (ELs) take and how schools are held accountable for test outcomes. The map at the end of this document shows which English language proficiency assessments ELs take in different states.

Accountability: This refers to the policies and procedures states use to set learning goals for all students and for certain groups of students. This includes how states measure and identify whether schools are meeting these goals, and how they support and improve schools and districts that are not meeting the goals.

Disaggregated Data: Data broken down to show information about different groups of students that make up a total population is often referred to as “disaggregated.” Under federal law (the *Every Student Succeeds Act*), data on the academic performance of all students in English, math, and science; data on ELs’ progress toward English proficiency; and other school accountability data must be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, as well as for students who are ELs, in the Migrant Education Program, in foster care, experiencing homelessness, connected to the military, or who have disabilities.



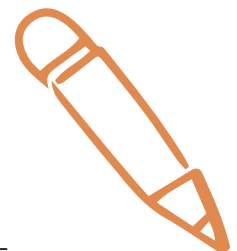
plete related tasks in English. Each state sets its own definition of proficiency.

English Language Proficiency (ELP) Assessment:

This is a type of test that states use to measure ELs’ speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills each year. Every state has a standardized ELP assessment that is aligned with the state’s English language proficiency standards and goals. You can find out which ELP assessment your child takes in the map at the end of this document.



English Learner (EL): An EL is a student between the ages of 3 and 21 who is enrolled in elementary or secondary school, whose native language is a language other than English, and who is developing the English skills needed to succeed in English-language classrooms. Identified ELs are protected by civil rights laws and are entitled to English language development supports. A part of the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* known as Title III provides funding to support EL education.



English Language Proficiency: Students are proficient when they attain the level of English needed to understand grade-level academic content and com-

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): This is the main federal education law for public schools in the United States. ESSA is the 2015 reauthorization of the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Among other things, the law holds schools accountable for how well students are learning. ESSA also funds a variety of programs that aim to provide an equal opportunity to learn for traditionally underserved students, including ELs.



Home Language Survey:

This is a form families complete when a student registers in a new school district. It is used as part of a process to identify ELs to make sure their school provides them access to appropriate educational opportunities. Students who are found to have a home language other than English then take an English language placement test, and the school uses students' proficiency scores to determine the appropriate placement for them in English language instruction.

Lau v. Nichols: This lawsuit was brought by parents of non-English-proficient Chinese students against the San Francisco Unified School District. In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that just because ELs receive an identical education to their peers does not mean they are getting an equal education, as required by the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. The court ruled that schools have an obligation to provide ELs with services that ensure they have access to the same education as their non-EL peers, such as support in learning English.

Long-Term English Learner: This is a formal educational classification given to students who have

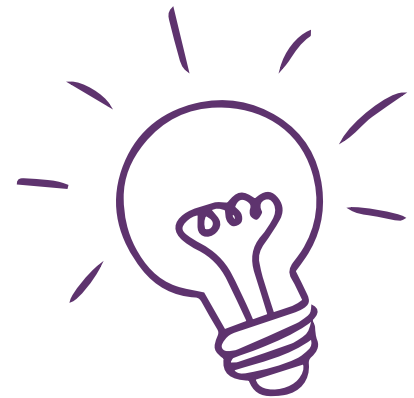
been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than four to seven years (depending on the state). This indicates they are not progressing toward English proficiency at the expected pace. Many are also struggling academically due to their limited English skills.

Reclassification: When ELs meet the criteria set by the state to be considered English proficient, they exit EL status. This process of changing a student's status from "EL" to "former EL" is called reclassification.

Recently Arrived English Learner: According to ESSA, a recently arrived EL is a student who has been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months. Depending on the state, these students may be excused from taking the state's reading/language arts tests one time, or they may take the test, but their scores may not be included in accountability calculations.

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education:

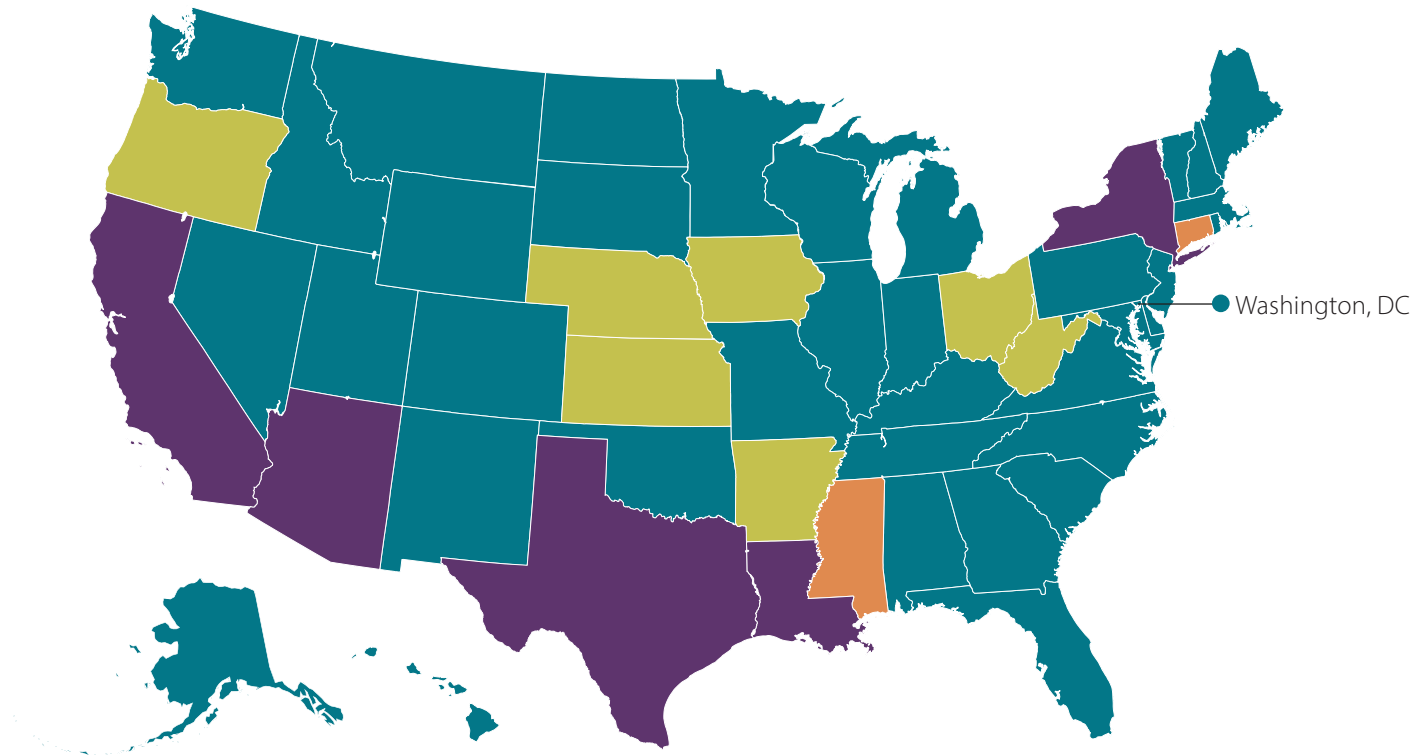
These students are new arrivals to U.S. schools who have experienced interrupted education due to war, civil unrest, migration, or other factors, or who had limited education in their countries of origin due to a lack of school resources or trained teachers. These students are academically behind other students of the same age, and those in older grades may not have as many educational credits or hours as students are expected to at that age. They may also have limited reading and writing skills in their home language.



What Is My State's English Language Proficiency Test Called?

All states can choose which English Language proficiency (ELP) test to use. The two most popular ELP assessments are ACCESS for ELLs and ELPA21. Several states have state-specific ELP assessments. For more details on which test your state uses, check out the map and the test descriptions below it.

■ ACCESS for ELLs ■ ELPA21 ■ LAS Links ■ State-Specific Test



ACCESS for ELLs: This standardized ELP test was developed by the WIDA Consortium and is used by its member states. “ACCESS for ELLs” stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners.

Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA): This standards-based assessment measures students’ English language proficiency, meeting the requirements of both the federal and state law. AZELLA is used to decide on the right services for a student (placement) and to exit students out of EL services when they achieve English proficiency (reassessment).

English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21): This standardized ELP test was developed by the ELPA21 Consortium and is used by its member states.

English Language Proficiency Assessment for Californians (ELPAC): The ELPAC is the required state ELP test that California local education agencies must give K-12 students who are ELs. The ELPAC is aligned with the 2012 California English Language Development Standards. It consists of two separate assessments: one for the initial identification of students as ELs, and a second one to measure a student’s progress each year in learning English and to identify the student’s level of English proficiency.

English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)

(Louisiana): ELPT measures English language development in reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Its purpose is to measure ELs' annual progress toward English Proficiency. Louisiana uses a related tool, called the English Language Proficiency Screener (ELPS), to help determine whether a student is an EL.

LAS Links Assessment System (Connecticut & Mississippi)

This is a system of ELP assessments for K-12 students who have been identified as ELs. An assessment is administered annually to monitor ELs' progress in acquiring English.

New York State English as a Second Language

Achievement Test (NYSESLAT): This assessment is designed to annually assess the English language proficiency of all ELs enrolled in Grades K–12 in New York State schools. The test provides the state and schools with important information about ELs' English language development.

Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)

This standardized test is used to assess the progress that Emergent Bilinguals (EB) students—another name for ELs—make in learning English.



This guide was prepared by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (NCIIP). Its authors are Delia Pompa and Jazmin Flores Peña. This project was supported by Seek Common Ground.

For more information on English Learner testing and school accountability, feel free to contact us at info@migrationpolicy.org.

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