

## **A Diagnostic Tool for Taking your Program's Pulse**

The questionnaire that follows is a print-friendly version of the "Diagnostic Tool" for self-evaluating English language programs in states, districts and schools. This tool was presented by Ellen Forte, Roberta Schlicher, and Molly Faulkner-Bond at the National Title I Conference, in a session titled "**Making Sure Your Program for English Learners (ELs) Passes the Civil Rights Test,**" on February 2, 2011.

This document is meant to provide users with a simple form for recording information about their programs in response to the 12 primary questions and related sub-questions that the presenters believe are critical to a successful and compliant program for ELs. We encourage users to take substantive notes about their findings for each numbered sub-question, and make a holistic rating about how well their education agency is fulfilling the responsibilities associated with each. Based on sub-question ratings, users may estimate an overall rating for each primary question.

Please note that this tool is meant to support administrators' efforts to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement for their language programs and services; it cannot guarantee a program's compliance with federal requirements. This tool is best used as a first step in an education agency's work to identify and address practices that would benefit from tighter scrutiny, improved conceptualization, or further study to determine their quality. Useful "next steps" after completing this questionnaire might include:

- Gathering parents, teachers, students and/ or administrators for focus groups to get their input on effective programs and services;
- Organizing committees to address specific areas for improvement and highlight program strengths;
- Consulting personnel in one's governing agency (e.g., the state education agency if the questionnaire has been completed by a local education agency) for support to determine a course of action;
- Consulting outside experts to determine a plan for improvement; and,
- Making alterations to the language instruction program, EL screening or identification practices, or other programs within one's state, district, or school.

## Summary of Diagnostic Questions

### Identification and Placement

#### 1. Is there a standardized process in place for identification and placement of ELs?

##### 1.1 Does the process include:

1.1.1 A home language survey or other method for identifying students who may need language support services?

1.1.2 A standardized screener to determine language proficiency?

1.1.2.1 How is the screener administered and scored?

1.2 Are additional support services provided for ELs based on the results of the standardized placement screener?

1.2.1 In addition to screening for language needs, are ELs also screened for performance in other content areas?

1.2.2 If not, how is placement in other subjects determined?

#### 2. How are the results of a student's placement into a language instruction program communicated to the parents, student and school?

2.1 Are parents notified within 30 days after the beginning of the school year, or within 2 weeks if their child enrolls after the beginning of the year?

2.1.1 Are notifications provided to parents in a language they can understand?

2.1.2 Does the parental notification of placement results include information about parents' ability to opt out of the program?

2.1.3 Does the parental notification letter include all of the information required under Title I section 1112(g)(1)(A)/Title III Section 3302(a)?

2.2 Are content teachers notified if/when EL students are placed in their classes?

2.2.1 Do content instructors receive any information about the linguistic proficiency and/or academic ability of newly identified ELs who are placed in their classes?

2.2.2 Do content instructors receive any other information about newly identified ELs who are placed in their classes?

## Instruction

- 3. Is there a program in place to help ELs learn English so that they may eventually participate in mainstream content classes without linguistic support?**
  - 3.1 Is the program for language instruction based on sound research and theory?
  - 3.2 Is the language instruction program implemented thoroughly and with fidelity?
  - 3.3 Is the language instruction program designed to ensure that all ELs receive appropriate service, regardless of their age, native language, native language proficiency, or formal education background?
  - 3.4 Does the language instruction program have a long-term vision for ELs' academic achievement? Specifically, does the program:
    - 3.4.1 Provide ELs with instruction in both English language development and the language of academic content?
    - 3.4.2 Ensure that ELs who exit are prepared to access grade-level content instruction in English?
    - 3.4.3 Have a clear, research-based vision for the timeframe in which students are expected to acquire English?
      - 3.4.3.1 Does this vision appropriately differentiate for variables such as age, native language proficiency, formal education background, etc., that may affect the rate at which different students acquire English?
  - 3.5 Is there a process for ensuring that students whose parents waive their right to services receive linguistic support in mainstream classes?
- 4. Is there a system in place to ensure that staff are adequately qualified to assist ELs with becoming proficient in English and experiencing success in academic content classes?**
  - 4.1 Do teachers within the language instruction program(s) have the appropriate qualifications ?
    - 4.1.1 Are teachers who deliver instruction in students' native language fluent in the language of instruction?
    - 4.1.2 Are teachers who deliver ESL instruction licensed with a state certification or other endorsement?
    - 4.1.3 If teachers within the language instruction program are also teaching academic content courses (English, mathematics, science, history/social science), do they have a state endorsement or certification in the content course?
  - 4.2 Do all teachers with ELs in their classes (content or language instruction) understand their responsibility to ensure these students can access their instruction?

- 4.3 Do all teachers receive professional development for learning and implementing best practices for instruction for ELs?

### **Assessment**

- 5. Is there a standardized English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) in place to determine whether ELs are making progress in learning English and exiting the language program in a reasonable timeframe?**

5.1 Do all ELs in all grade-levels (K-12) take the ELPA on an annual basis, as required by federal law?

5.2 Do all persons involved with the administration (and scoring, if applicable) of the ELPA receive adequate training?

5.3 What evidence is there that ELPA scores accurately reflect students' proficiency in English?

5.4 Does the ELPA and information from ELPA scores adequately determine whether:

5.4.1 ELs are acquiring English language skills at a pace that is consistent with the program goals?

5.4.2 ELs are receiving instruction in both English language development and the language of academic content?

5.5 Is a system in place to share EL performance results across schools, districts, and states if students transfer?

- 6. Is there a system in place to ensure that parents or guardians of ELs are informed of their child's progress in learning English on the ELPA as well as their performance on the statewide academic content assessments?**

6.1 Is the information provided to parents or guardians in a language they can understand?

6.2 Are allowances made for parent or guardians who may not be literate in English or their native language?

### **Exit and Redesignation**

- 7. Is there a process in place for transitioning ELs out of the language instructional program?**

7.1 Are parents, teachers, and other appropriate staff involved in the process?

7.2 What criteria have been established for program exit?

7.3 What documentation and records are maintained for program exit?

**8. Is there a system in place to monitor the performance of former ELs to ensure that their English skills are sufficient for them to perform successfully in regular classes?**

8.1 How are former ELs performing compared to other students? Is there a disparity or gap?

8.2 Are multiple measures used to assess the overall performance of former ELs such as review of grades, meeting promotion and graduation requirements, parent/teacher feedback as well as standardized test results?

**Equity and Access**

**9. Is there a system in place to ensure that ELs have access to, and are participating in, the same programs and services as all other students?**

9.1 Are ELs enrolled in advanced courses?

9.2 Are ELs participating in gifted and talented programs?

9.3 If needed, are ELs participating in special education programs?

9.4 Are ELs participating in extracurricular programs such as sports, clubs, band, orchestra, chorus, school government, the newspaper, the yearbook, etc?

**10. Is there a system in place to support ELs in graduating from high school and accessing post-secondary options?**

10.1 Are ELs graduating at similar rates as all other students?

10.2 What is being done to ensure that ELs are not dropping out of school?

10.3 How are transcripts evaluated and credits awarded for secondary work completed in other countries?

10.4 Are supports in place to assist ELs with applying to college, technical training, or other post-secondary options?

**11. Is there a system in place to ensure that parents or guardians of ELs are involved in the program planning process?**

11.1 What type of outreach efforts are conducted to ensure that parents are involved in planning?

11.1.1 Are parents or guardians of ELs involved in state, district and school committees at the same rate as other stakeholders?

11.1.2 What method is in place to minimize language barriers, if applicable?

## **Program Design and Evaluation**

### **12. Is there a system in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the program?**

12.1 Does the program have clearly defined goals by which to measure whether or not it is working?

12.2 How are program goals evaluated?

12.3 Can it be shown that the program is being implemented with sufficient resources to ensure it is functioning as intended?

12.4 What is considered a reasonable amount of time for ELs to learn English? Does it differ by age, grade, time in program?

12.4.1 Is this estimation based on scientifically based evidence?

12.5 What is the process for changing the program if it is found not to be effective?