



**Success Indicator PR05:** School staff and faculty complete a language and academic plan for each EL student and update this at the end of each marking period. (5898)

**Overview:** Updates to the plan should emphasize performance on formative assessments, including classroom observations on academic tasks.

The plans should specify students' areas of development as well as necessary instructional modifications. Data-informing plans and review of progress include, but are not limited to, teacher observation reports, including narrative and quantitative data as well as qualitative data; social history with information gathered from non-school observations and families; administration of W-APT and/or ACCESS for ELL 2.0; analysis of student work samples; parents, classroom teachers, ESL specialist, and principal sign each plan.

While most teachers may be highly skilled in designing and implementing informal assessments of student learning in their content areas and developing informal academic plans corresponding to student learning goals, research has found, however, that many of these assessments (including standardized tests) are not inclusive of or appropriate for EL students (Davidson, 1994). Though federal regulations mandate that EL students are included in schools' annual assessments (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005), evidence suggests that ELs often face challenges related to academic success and English language development that may not be captured by current standardized assessments of language proficiency (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). These results suggest a need for review and revisions of current processes involved with monitoring academic success among ELs.

**Questions:** Why is it important that the process for monitoring academic success and language development of ELs be transparent and standardized? How can the process(es) for monitoring academic success and (English) language development of ELs be transparent and standardized? How can teachers use academic plans to monitor academic success and language development among ELs?

**Why is it important that the process for monitoring academic success and language development of ELs be transparent and standardized?**

Transparent and standardized processes for monitoring academic success and language development among ELs is a critical foundation for developing academic plans and goals that are best suited to meet the needs of students. Currently, no clear or widely accepted guidelines exist for monitoring academic achievement and performance or instructing ELs (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). Inappropriately designed or implemented assessments can have serious and negative implications for students' achievement (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). For instance, early research has shown that ELs have been incorrectly assigned to academic tracks and over-referred to remedial and special education courses based on misleading results of assessments and poorly informed plans for monitoring student learning (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994). Given a well-documented and persistent achievement gap between EL students and those students whose native language is English, it is imperative that more accu-

rate assessments be developed and streamlined, as the current methods for monitoring academic success are largely inadequate for ELs (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004).

In order for educational and instructional programs and practices to be equitable, accessible, and effective, assessments should be tailored to student populations (Anderson, 2001). Research shows that while the number of ELs is continuing to increase at fast rates across the United States (Thomas & Collier, 2002), many teachers receive inadequate or no real training specific to issues related to instruction, academic success, and language development among ELs (NCES, 2002). Both formative and summative assessments are needed to inform teachers about ELs' language development as well as information about their learning and academic success within pertinent content domains. It is important that these assessments are inclusive and appropriate for all students, including those with varying levels of English language proficiency (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). These types of comprehensive assessments, however, have not historically been used across classrooms (Brown, 2002; LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994).

### **How can the process(es) for monitoring academic success and (English) language development of ELs be transparent and standardized?**

Researchers have described methods for ensuring appropriate monitoring of ELs' language development and learning in content areas. For instance, LaCelle-Peterson and Rivera (1994) recommend that:

Information on language learning should include measures of the student's proficiency in both academic and social uses of English, and if it is part of the instructional program, proficiency in his or her native language. Information about the student's academic achievement in content areas should be collected in ways that allow students to show their knowledge, skills, and abilities through the medium of the language or languages in which the material was taught (p. 65-66).

Moreover, measures that involve faculty, staff, ESL specialists, administrators, and families are needed to improve individualized academic plans and monitor the effectiveness of instruction for ELs. These measures should include both qualitative and quantitative assessments based on teachers' observations. Measures should specifically focus on:

- capitalizing on students' natural and cultural resources
- collecting meaningful and ongoing information about student learning outcomes, including both short- and long-term outcomes monitored by direct teacher observations and interviews with students and families
- monitoring progress over time to assess the varied effects of differential strategies and instructional choices; providing faculty and staff with ongoing support related to professional development that includes access to peer supervision and coaching
- creating opportunities for collaborative networks between parents, teachers, and community members (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

Providing support at the administrative level enables teachers to design and implement strategies for monitoring progress on an ongoing basis within their classrooms (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2007).

### **How can teachers use academic plans to monitor academic success and language development among ELs?**

School faculty and staff should work to monitor students' academic achievement, learning, and language development on an ongoing basis to develop and maintain a more comprehensive understanding of the students' skills and specific needs, to capitalize on the most effective instructional strategies, and to ultimately support student learning. The processes involved with monitoring these developments should involve performance-based assessments (i.e., performance on written and oral assignments) and portfolio assessments that include several pieces of student work over a specific period of time (Using Informal Assessments, 2017), as well as standardized assessments appropriate for use with ELs, such as ACCESS for ELLs 2.0.

Increasing transparency of the methods used to monitor and assess EL learning and development is an important step in modifying instructional strategies, and academic plans should be implemented systematically and consistently to best support positive outcomes in ELs (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). Thus, school faculty and staff who work with ELs should develop individualized academic plans for each student that involve formative assessments, based on systematic observations of students' performance on tasks in the classroom.



To achieve standardization across EL students and classrooms, each academic plan should be updated at the end of the marking period. Previous research also underscores the importance of a collaborative approach to building academic plans and monitoring student achievement and development (Himmel, 2012). Direct observational reports (including narrative data as well as quantitative indicators) provided by teachers should be supplemented with observations made outside of school relevant to students' social history (see "Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit [Michigan Department of Education, 2011]). This comprehensive and systematic collection of data is needed to assess for progress and further inform academic plans, and ultimately supporting positive outcomes among ELs.

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