DISCERNING — AND FOSTERING — WHAT ENGLISH LEARNERS *CAN DO* WITH LANGUAGE

Guidance on Gathering and Interpreting Complementary Evidence of Classroom Language Uses for Reclassification Decisions

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CCSSO
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English Learners Can Do with Language

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Uses for Reclassification Decisions

Authors:

Daniella Molle, Wisconsin Center for Education Research

Robert Linquanti, WestEd

Rita MacDonald, Wisconsin Center for Education Research

H. Gary Cook, Wisconsin Center for Education Research

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Introduction

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) established an *English Language Learner Assessment Advisory Task Force* in 2012 to address opportunities and challenges for English learners (ELs) presented by new college- and career-ready standards and assessments.[1] This Advisory Task Force—composed of technical staff and leadership from multi-state assessment consortia, EL researchers and technical assistance experts, policy advisers, and other stakeholders—prioritized efforts to move toward a more common definition of English learner within states and across states participating in multi-state assessment consortia. They did so for two reasons: it was required of states participating in any of four federally-funded assessment consortia (USED, 2010); and it was long recognized as a key policy issue for equity in EL program funding, educational opportunity, assessment, and accountability (National Research Council [NRC], 2011; Abedi, 2008).

From 2012 to 2015, Advisory Task Force members held meetings; facilitated three national working sessions with a broad representation of national, state, and local stakeholders; and produced a series of five working papers that provide guidance on key policy and technical issues in defining ELs. CCSSO subsequently consolidated these five published papers into a single volume (see Linquanti, Cook, Bailey, & MacDonald, 2016).

National-level interest in this topic has grown as the December 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires that states adopt standardized statewide EL entry and exit procedures, in timely consultation with a geographically representative sample of local education agencies (§3111(b)(2)(A); §3113(b)(2)). Moreover, regulations proposed by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) (*Federal Register*, May 31, 2016) clarify that this statutory provision requires such State procedures "to include *uniform criteria* that are applied *statewide*" (p. 34585, emphasis added). Additionally, with respect to state EL exit criteria, USED's proposed regulations expressly "prohibit a 'local option,' which cannot be standardized and under which LEAs could have widely varying criteria" (*Federal Register*, op. cit., p. 34586).

In *Re-examining Reclassification: Guidance from a National Working Session on Policies and Practices for Exiting Students from English Learner Status*, authors Linquanti and Cook (2015) examine issues and options associated with reclassifying ELs to fluent English proficient (R-FEP) status.[2] In particular, the report describes issues and tensions surrounding current EL reclassification policies and practices, and offers guidance to districts, states, and multi-state consortia for moving toward more common EL reclassification criteria. Several findings and recommendations from that report motivate this guidance document. In the following section, we briefly review these specific findings and recommendations.[3]

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[1]   CCSSO established the Task Force with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and in-kind support from the Understanding Language initiative of Stanford University and the WIDA Consortium.
[2]   This report summarized and developed ideas discussed at one of the national working sessions referenced above.
[3]   See full report for all nine recommendations derived from deliberations of national working session participants (Linquanti, Cook, Bailey, & MacDonald, 2016, pp. 93-104).

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Rationale

In their survey of state reclassification criteria, Linquanti and Cook (2015) found that 29 states and the District of Columbia use a single criterion—the state's English language proficiency (ELP) test—for determining which EL students exit EL status. The remaining 21 states use between two and four exit criteria, including academic content test achievement (17 states), teacher input or evaluation (15 states), and some form of parental notification or consultation (six states).

The national working session participants supported several recommendations regarding the reclassification of ELs that provide a rationale for developing the present guidance document.

First, participants recommended that *states and districts should select reclassification criteria that directly relate to students' uses of language needed to carry out grade-level practices in academic content areas and to meet grade-level content standards.*

Language-intensive practices (e.g., constructing arguments from evidence and critiquing others' reasoning; providing detailed explanations and communicating information; seeking clarification and building on what others say in oral exchanges, etc.) are central to college- and career-ready content standards, and many ELP standards implicitly or explicitly address them. As these practices entail more interactive and strategic uses of language, large-scale standardized testing approaches are less able to appropriately sample such target language uses in a single, annual administration.

Locally gathering and evaluating evidence of student language uses in a standardized, comparable way is challenging, yet doing so would capture valuable *complementary* evidence that illuminates EL students' language uses while they engage in classroom-based learning. Such evidence can also help educators better recognize and foster students' discipline-specific uses of language across the content areas.

Second, national working session participants recommended that *states should establish the "English proficient" performance standard on the state ELP assessment using methods that take account of EL students' academic proficiency on content assessments, while not requiring a minimum level of performance on academic content assessments for exit.*

Empirical methods that examine the relationship between EL students' performance on ELP and academic content assessments have become widely used in recent years to establish an "English proficient" performance standard on the state ELP assessment. These methods help determine the range of performance on an ELP assessment where EL students' academic content achievement in English becomes less related to their ELP level.[4] That is, the methods identify a performance range where students' level of English language proficiency no longer appears to inhibit meaningful participation in state academic assessments.

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[4]   See Cook, Linquanti, Chinen, & Jung (2012), pp. 7–28, for discussion and demonstration of empirical methods to determine a range of ELP performance that can support policy deliberations on performance standard setting.

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Proposed federal regulations for implementing ESSA align fully with this recommendation. The regulations state specifically that "scores on content assessments cannot be included as part of a State's [EL] exit criteria" (p. 34587) as these assessments are neither designed nor intended to support inferences about EL students' English language proficiency, and may contribute to classification errors. Indeed, many monolingual English speakers do not attain the academic achievement performance standard on these assessments that some state and local education agencies require of ELs for exit from EL status.

Third, national working session participants recommended that *states and districts should make EL reclassification decisions using more than an annual summative ELP assessment result; they should also examine EL students' classroom language uses as an additional reclassification criterion.*

Professional standards of educational and psychological testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education [AERA/APA/NCME], 2014, pp. 198-199) clearly stipulate that high-stakes decisions regarding students—particularly educational program placement and provision of services for English learners—should not be made based on a single test score, and that "other relevant information" constituting complementary evidence is warranted.

In addition, the current federal definition of an EL (*ESSA* §8101(20)) explicitly notes EL students' language proficiency should be sufficiently developed so they are not denied "the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English."

These recommendations reflect a consensus view of national working session participants that EL reclassification policies and practices can and should be strengthened, made more coherent, and standardized within states in ways that enable local educators—those closest to EL students—to meaningfully participate in making reclassification decisions. Session participants suggested that states could strengthen reclassification practices and ensure educator participation by developing and implementing statewide, standardized processes and tools for gathering evidence about students' classroom language uses. These could provide needed complementary evidence of more interactive, discipline-specific, process-related, and classroom-based language uses that are not adequately captured by annual, large-scale, summative ELP assessments.

Participants expressed strong consensus on the importance of gathering evidence of ELs' language uses in the classroom to support judgments about students' "ability to achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English." Specifically, they saw value in providing teachers of ELs with opportunities to systematically examine students' language uses posited in the new ELP standards in ways that could yield complementary evidence useful for reclassification decisions. In effect, the participants considered this to be "other relevant information" about the student, as expressed in the AERA/APA/NCME professional standards.

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Guidelines on Developing and Implementing Evidence-Gathering Processes and Tools for Observing Classroom Language Uses

During the 2014 national working session discussions, participants suggested the following guidelines related to the development and implementation of evidence-gathering processes and tools on classroom language uses:

1. - Evidence gathered should be *complementary* to, and not duplicative of, language uses targeted on the state ELP assessment.

2. - Evidence of classroom language uses should be student-focused, assets-based (i.e., describing what EL students *can do* with English); relevant and pedagogically useful for classroom teachers; meaningful and helpful to students; and developed for use by *both ESL and academic content area* teachers.

3. - Evidence-gathering methods should help educators regularly examine and recognize a *range of proficiencies* in target language uses and not just focus at the level of performance considered to be English-proficient for reclassification.

4. - Evidence-gathering processes and tools should be useful throughout the year *for formative purposes* (i.e., to gather evidence of student strengths and growth areas in using language, provide descriptive feedback to students, and help teachers extend students' language uses and disciplinary learning).

5. Evidence-gathering processes and tools should be used within a specific assessment window for *summative purposes* (e.g., reclassification decisions), and particularly as a more standardized method to implement teacher judgment/recommendation criteria.

6. - *Substantial professional development and sustained administrative support* are critical to successfully implementing locally-administered language use observation processes and tools statewide. This includes a mechanism for effectively calibrating professional judgments among teachers.

National working session participants and educators reviewing our illustrative tools also identified the following potential challenges in systematically collecting classroom-level evidence about ELs' classroom language uses:

1. - Using the same evidence-gathering processes and tools during the year for formative purposes and at the end of the year for summative purposes—especially if the latter is associated with high-stakes accountability decisions and indicators—could unintentionally undermine the use and utility of the processes and tools.

2. - Incorporating classroom-based language use evidence in EL reclassification decisions might be difficult—or even prohibited—in states that (a) currently use only the ELP test for reclassification decisions; and/or (b) use English proficiency attainment or EL reclassification rates as part of teacher evaluation. In some instances, using classroom-based evidence may require changes in state law.

3. Systematically collecting and appropriately analyzing classroom-based evidence of language uses requires time and commitment to training and implementation, potentially generating additional responsibilities for academic subject matter and ESL teachers. While the collection and use of this complementary classroom evidence might strengthen EL teaching and learning as well as EL reclassification processes, it may require shifts in educator roles and responsibilities, and resource allocation at district and school levels.

These concerns notwithstanding, several states have expressed interest in exploring ways to systematically collect complementary evidence that allows for valid inferences about ELs' classroom-based language uses, and integrating this evidence with state ELP assessment results in EL reclassification decisions.

This document supplements CCSSO's published framework and guidance documents on moving toward a more common EL definition. Specifically, we intend to do the following:

- Describe how states might develop standardized methods that local educators can use to gather and interpret evidence of EL students' classroom language uses;

- Suggest how states might ensure this evidence targets more interactive, discipline-specific, and classroom-based language uses found in state ELP standards; is complementary to that of the state's annual ELP assessment; and is appropriately used in decisions to reclassify EL students; and

- Offer an illustrative prototype of tools states might develop in collaboration with local educators to collect and evaluate ELs' classroom language uses, including a sample observation sheet and sample rubrics.

There are two important caveats regarding these proposed uses. First, the tools illustrated here are simply examples; they are neither designed nor intended to be implemented directly as local decision-making metrics. In accordance with ESSA provisions, states should develop such tools in collaboration with local districts, and provide extensive guidelines and support to ensure valid and consistent application within and across districts in a state. Second, the process described for creating these tool prototypes should be considered illustrative of the many possible approaches a state might take to develop such resources with a representative group of partner districts.

Approach to Developing the Sample Evidence-Gathering Processes and Tools

We developed this guidance document with substantial input from educators of ELs over a period of several months. We presented the processes and tools to K-12 administrators, academic subject-matter teachers, and ESL teachers in New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Wisconsin. We asked teachers in both elementary and secondary schools across these states to pilot the tools with their EL students, and subsequently engaged these educators in focus group discussions. We solicited feedback about the feasibility, usefulness, and thoroughness of the proposed processes and accompanying sample tools. We then successively revised the processes and tools based on the input we received.

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Guidelines for Gathering and Analyzing Evidence of Classroom-Based Language Uses

The use of classroom-based evidence to complement standardized, large-scale, summative ELP assessment provides educators with a direct window into how students use language in classroom-based learning. By design, summative ELP assessments elicit a sample of students' language uses to compare to established benchmarks along a trajectory of increasing proficiency in academic uses of English, and provide information at a large grain size. Educators can use this information to determine initial program placement, monitor ELP growth and attainment, and support reclassification decisions. Summative assessments, however, are not well suited for assessing more strategic and collaborative language uses, or for informing timely classroom-based decisions that support students' language development. Classroom-based evidence of language uses illuminates the range of students' responses to the demands of specific instructional tasks and learning opportunities, thus providing critically important information that can support inferences about ELs' potential to participate and succeed in classrooms with minimal or no specialized language support. Moreover, systematically collecting classroom-based evidence enables educators to note and foster students' language use relative to key practices over time and across contexts such as tasks, instructional units, or content areas (Heritage et al., 2013).

Where should the evidence come from?

Given the situated nature of language use and proficiency, evidence should come from several content areas. At a minimum this includes the three content areas whose assessment is required under ESSA: reading/English language arts (R/ELA), mathematics, and science. Educators can streamline evidence gathering by collecting one type of evidence from each content area (e.g., samples of writing in science, observations of collaborative interactions in math, etc.). Teachers should be given sufficient time to collect this evidence (e.g., one to two months). This will allow for more sustained observations and evidence collection that is representative of what students *can do* with language. It will also allow for discussions of student language-use evidence and artifacts in cases when more than one teacher is involved.

What kinds of language uses should the evidence represent?

As suggested by national working session participants, classroom-based evidence should illuminate students' uses of language as they engage *in the grade-level practices of academic content areas*. These practices are typically described in content standards directly, or in ancillary documents. For example, the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics* (National Governors Association [NGA] and CCSSO, 2010) specify eight mathematical practices (including "make sense of problems and persevere in solving them" and "construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others"). The *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS, 2013) specify several science and engineering practices key to students' engagement in and understanding of science (including "plan and carry out investigations," "obtain, evaluate, and communicate information," and "engage in argument from evidence"). The *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies* (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013) define four dimensions that support a robust social studies program rooted in inquiry (including

"developing disciplinary concepts and tools" and "evaluating sources and using evidence"). While the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts* do not explicitly specify disciplinary practices, key practices embedded in these standards, derived by a national team of language experts (CCSSO, 2012, p.11) include "produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience," and "build upon the ideas of others and articulate their own [ideas] when working collaboratively."

Gathering evidence of ELs' language uses as they engage in such disciplinary practices increases the likelihood that the observed language uses will be discipline-specific. For example, observing a student making sense of a mathematical problem can provide evidence specific to the student's language uses in mathematics. Additionally, a focus on language uses in disciplinary practices affords the opportunity to leverage open-ended and intellectually engaging tasks that are more conducive to sustained and extensive language use, since such tasks encourage—even require—students to express ideas, construct explanations, argue from evidence, and negotiate meaning with others.

Which language domains should the collected evidence address?

Given the importance of effective communication and collaborative interactions in college- and career-ready standards, national working session participants advocated that classroom evidence should document how ELs use language to interact and collaborate with peers. This evidence addresses primarily students' speaking and listening competencies in the context of collaborative learning. To the best of our knowledge, no standardized, large-scale K-12 ELP assessment is designed to adequately measure these aspects of language use.

In addition to collecting evidence of students' interactions in collaborative learning contexts, educators should collect and analyze evidence of student writing. We recommend this for three reasons. First, writing is integral to many disciplinary practices across the content areas, which emphasize producing texts that effectively communicate ideas and persuade with evidence. Second, ELs' effectiveness in writing is an increasingly important component of their ability to develop and demonstrate conceptual understandings of disciplinary ideas. Third, large-scale, summative ELP assessments usually assess writing that students produce on-demand during a fixed period. Alternatively, portfolios of student writing can illustrate how students' ideas and language uses develop over time and across settings, as students work in collaboration with others (e.g., in writing group observations in science or taking notes during a book group discussion in ELA) and individually (in composing drafts on their own). Evaluating students' classroom-produced writing can therefore provide an important complement to large-scale annual assessments of written English language proficiency.

Regarding the domain of reading, we are reluctant to recommend that educators gather additional classroom-based observational evidence. First, educators indicated to us that they already gather and use evidence from multiple assessments targeting a range of reading competencies (e.g., comprehension and fluency), especially in the elementary grades.[5] Second, assessing reading comprehension typically involves EL students' speaking or writing, which increases the complexity of observing and accurately

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[5]   National working session participants strongly emphasized that the classroom evidence educators are asked to collect should be complementary and non-duplicative of information already being collected.

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evaluating reading comprehension. Thus, while we do not describe processes or offer sample tools for *collecting* additional evidence on reading, the sample language rubrics we provide (see appendices B and C) includes descriptors for the reading domain to assist educators in *interpreting reading-related evidence they already collect* from a language development perspective.

How should educators evaluate the gathered evidence?

When evaluating evidence of classroom language uses as part of reclassification decision-making, teachers need to refer to statewide benchmarks for EL reclassification. As noted above, USED's proposed regulations expressly prohibit states from allowing non-standardized "local option" reclassification criteria (*Federal Register*, op. cit., p. 34586). Therefore, in developing processes and tools for use statewide, state education agency (SEA) personnel will need to work closely with district and school leaders to establish and employ a rigorous validation process for determining what constitutes adequate evidence, how tools can be standardized for use by educators statewide, and how evaluation criteria can be applied fairly. Given that ESSA requires states to establish and implement standardized statewide EL exit procedures and criteria "with timely and meaningful consultation with local educational agencies" (ESSA §3111(b)(2)(A); §3113(b)(2)), this approach is supported by the law itself.

The development and refinement of statewide processes and tools for observing and evaluating EL students' classroom language uses should occur in iterative stages over time. This approach can strengthen evidence-gathering processes and tools, and ensure fairness in their application. For example, when evaluating evidence of ELs' language uses, it is important that state and local leaders consider both the language demands of content standards reflected in state ELP standards, and the classroom language uses typical of non-EL students. In other words, educators should evaluate ELs' language uses in the context of state ELP standards less amenable to large-scale summative assessment, and relative to the current language uses of ELs' English-proficient peers.

In developing a statewide reclassification criterion related to classroom language uses, state and local leaders might consider the following steps:

1. - Determine the target language demands of key standards-based learning tasks that students will engage in while complementary evidence is gathered. State and local leaders should agree on what the content and related ELP standards to be addressed expect students to do with language. The ELP standards can then guide leaders in determining what language students need to process and produce to meet standards-based expectations.

2. - Collect evidence from multiple EL and non-EL students as they engage in the selected learning tasks. Preferably, this evidence will include students who are (a) at a range of proficiency levels (ELP for ELs and content proficiency for non-ELs) and (b) enrolled in different districts. State and local leaders should gather all evidence using the same processes and tools (e.g., observation sheets, observation protocols, portfolios, etc.).

3. - Evaluate the gathered evidence from both EL and non-EL students using the same data analysis tools (e.g., rubrics, rating scales, etc.).

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4. - Reflect on the similarities and differences in target language uses demonstrated by non-EL and EL students, and the importance of each target language use for EL students' full participation in classroom learning and academic success.

5.   Set statewide benchmarks for the English-proficient performance standard deemed sufficient for EL reclassification referencing the data analysis tools employed.

6. - Provide training and calibration materials to teachers across the state, ideally accessible online to facilitate consistent training and calibration.

The approach outlined above can facilitate collaboration among state and local leaders as stipulated in ESSA, and help establish a statewide, standardized, classroom-based reclassification criterion. Setting an English-proficient performance standard at the state level promotes consistent judgments statewide and relieves teachers of collecting evidence from non-EL students locally.

Who should collect and analyze the evidence?

Following the recommendations of the national working session participants, both academic subject matter and ESL teachers should collect and analyze evidence of EL students' language uses. Although teachers (especially at the secondary level) may collect evidence separately, analyzing and judging evidence collaboratively has the following advantages: it can strengthen content teachers' awareness of EL students' language uses and opportunities; heighten ESL teachers' understanding of disciplinary language uses and literacies expected across the content areas; and foster opportunities for coherence and alignment in lesson learning goals. Analyzing evidence collaboratively can also provide a more complete picture of EL students' language uses, as students may have varying opportunities to display language competencies across different content areas. Finally, collaborative analysis of evidence can strengthen reclassification decisions.

How should states support teachers in gathering and analyzing evidence?

As recommended by national working session participants, all teachers need training in order to effectively collect and analyze evidence of ELs' classroom language uses. Academic subject matter and ESL teachers we consulted also suggested that teachers would require training to use the evidence-gathering and evaluation tools confidently and reliably. They noted that many aspects of the processes outlined (e.g., collecting multiple drafts of written assignments, observing discipline-specific practices from a language use perspective, and evaluating interactive language uses) may not be part of educators' existing practices.

Once state and district leaders develop statewide, standardized processes and tools, the next step is to carry out local calibration training and implementation. For example, a language specialist in a leadership position could oversee local teacher training. This training must be sufficient and recurring so that new and continuing teachers and administrators can develop and deepen their understanding of discipline-specific language uses and language development, and build their capacity to use the tools. State-provided materials for local training might include: (a) online video samples and artifacts of student target language uses, illustrative of different levels of English language proficiency, for educator practice and

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certification; (b) videos of educators interpreting classroom evidence of EL students' language uses; and (c) facilitation guides for calibration discussions among educators. Such resources can support academic subject matter and ESL educators as they collect and collaboratively analyze evidence of EL students' classroom language uses.

Recommended Strategies for Gathering Evidence

We recommend that in utilizing local evidence in a statewide, standardized reclassification process, educators use *at least* the two sources of evidence described below.

Observation to Gather Evidence of Interactive Language Uses

To begin to understand how a student uses language to interact with peers during grade-level discipline-based classroom tasks, teachers can video-record or observe students.[6] Recording has the advantage of preserving the interaction but the potential drawback of being off-putting and/or distracting for students.[7] Teachers should consider conducting regular observations of student interactions so that students become accustomed to the process, as well as for validity purposes (see below).

With regard to using these processes and tools for summative decisions (e.g., reclassification), we recommend that teachers conduct repeated (two to four) observations of a student engaged in interaction in order to compile a sufficiently rich picture of the multiple ways in which that student uses language to accomplish subject matter tasks and communicative goals. Language use is dependent on the task, purpose, interlocutors, setting, and other factors. Teachers should therefore observe a student engaging in various activities (e.g., student- and teacher-led interactions, paired and small group discussions, collaborative explorations, joint presentations, etc.). Beyond the "summative window," teachers can use the same processes and tools to gather and analyze evidence of student language uses for formative purposes.

To facilitate a collaborative review and discussion of classroom evidence, both academic subject matter and ESL teachers should collect evidence of a student's language uses. The academic subject matter teacher may need to observe the student several times while the ESL teacher may only need to do so once (since the ESL teacher will likely be familiar with the student's interactive uses of language in the ESL classroom setting). When educators in both roles actively collect evidence of the student's language uses in the same content area classroom, they can compare and discuss their assessment of the student's uses of language in a particular discipline. If one teacher fulfills both academic subject matter and ESL instructional responsibilities (e.g., in a self-contained elementary classroom or a bilingual instructional setting), the teacher might invite a colleague to help collect and analyze evidence. Ideally, this colleague would be knowledgeable about second language development. This collaborative analysis of evidence may also strengthen the validity of inferences made.

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[6]   Audio recordings of group discourse, sometimes used for ease of collection and privacy protection, can make it difficult to distinguish the contributions of different students.
[7]   Privacy issues may also necessitate prior approval from parents/guardians and site/district leadership.

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A Student Portfolio to Gather Evidence of Literacy-based Language Uses

Teachers can compile a portfolio of student work as evidence of a student's language uses in writing. The portfolio should contain a range of texts that are part of the same assignment (notes, graphic organizers, sequential drafts, etc.). Since elementary students typically compose shorter texts when completing assignments, we recommend that the portfolio include three to five assignments at the elementary level and two to three assignments at the secondary level. The portfolio should consist of assignments completed with minimal or no language supports available only to EL students.

We recommend that students help select the assignments that make up their portfolio. The student and the ESL teacher that works with him/her the most should choose the assignments, with input from the academic subject matter teacher who gave the assignment.

As previously noted, portfolio evidence should be evaluated through a collaborative process involving academic subject matter and ESL teachers who employ a shared evaluation tool.

Considering Student and Family Perspectives in the Reclassification Process

Reclassification is a high-stakes decision for students and their families even when a change in status from EL to English proficient does not bring about an immediate change in instructional services or program. The change from EL to non-EL status signals that educators have sufficient evidence that the student can participate comparably to their non-EL peers and learn effectively in the classroom, in English, with minimal or no specialized language support. Just as students and families should understand the rationale for students receiving EL status and the additional, specialized services that come with it, so too should they be informed when the student has met specified exit criteria. Students and families should have an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns related to removal of EL status and accompanying services. This should be a standardized process, using a protocol that (a) clearly explains what will change programmatically and instructionally for the student; and (b) clearly documents questions and concerns that EL students or their parent/guardian may have related to an exit decision, and steps taken to address these questions and concerns. EL students meeting statewide, standardized exit criteria should be reclassified. Only in rare cases where there is a compelling educational reason, supported by documented evidence, should such students remain in EL status.

Sample Tools for Collecting and Analyzing Evidence

Appendices A, B, and C provide state and local educators with concrete examples of the kinds of tools they can develop to collect and analyze evidence of students' classroom-based language uses for both formative and summative (reclassification) purposes. Samples include an observation sheet and two versions of a language use rubric (one with three and the other with six descriptors per proficiency level). These tools are only examples. State and local educators will need to adapt and/or extend these sample tools, or develop equivalent tools that best meet their needs for collecting and analyzing evidence of classroom language uses. We provide a brief description of each tool below.

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Observation Sheet

The observation sheet (see appendix A) allows educators to characterize the language produced by an EL during interactions, and to contextualize this by noting opportunities for language use provided by the teacher and the language produced by the student's peers. The observation sheet also allows the observer to characterize what students *do* with language (such as initiate a discussion or ask for clarification), as well as to document actual language used. Both the action accomplished through language, and students' actual language, are important components of language proficiency.

Language Use Rubric

To illustrate the type of tool that educators might use when analyzing evidence of classroom language uses, we provide two sample language rubrics, a short rubric and an expanded rubric (see appendices B and C, respectively). We used the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) as a foundation for the sample rubrics because its descriptors are research-based, asset-focused, and context-specific, and it is independent of any state or assessment consortium. The labels for the language proficiency levels in the sample rubrics correspond to the Reference Performance Level Descriptors in Cook and MacDonald (2014).

The sample rubrics describe student language uses across the K-12 grade span. As a result, some of the higher-level descriptors may not apply to students in early grades. The "low," "moderate," and "high" labels are not intended to be statements about an *individual student's* English language proficiency. Rather, they are proxies for stages on a continuum of second language development. For example, the "low" level descriptors may be developmentally appropriate for a younger student and describe the expected performance of his/her non-EL peers.

A distinguishing feature of the rubrics is that they emphasize what students *can do* with language, encompass language uses from word to discourse, genre and narrative, and address multiple dimensions of language proficiency (e.g., quantity, complexity, coherence, and accuracy). Given that the rubrics capture multiple dimensions, a student's language uses may not always fall under the same proficiency level descriptor (or column) in the rubric. In other words, a student's control of grammatical forms may be at the "moderate" level while he/she may be at the "high" level in meeting genre expectations for narratives. It is also likely that a student's language uses in the same dimension (or row) of the rubric may straddle two levels.

We include two sample rubrics to acknowledge the range of educator background knowledge and the multiple potential uses of the tool. Educators who reviewed these rubrics expressed varying opinions on the number of descriptors needed to best evaluate a student's language uses; some preferred three proficiency level descriptors and judged six to be overwhelming, while others found three proficiency level descriptors insufficient to confidently evaluate a student's language uses and progress. In addition to the variation in educator background in evaluating language, there are multiple uses for these types of tools. For example, one of the rubrics may be more useful for formative (ongoing) assessment of a student's language uses, while the other may lend itself to language use assessment for summative purposes.

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Considerations When Analyzing Evidence

The interpretation of evidence necessarily involves evaluation and judgment. As educators interpret collected evidence of students' classroom language uses, they should consider the following contextual dimensions of that evidence.

Level of Independence

The language students use depends on the invitations, supports, and resources made available to them and the multiple ways in which they do (and do not) take advantage of these opportunities and resources. In evaluating student language uses, educators should consider the following questions:

- - What invitations, supports, and resources did the student have when engaging in an assignment or participating in a task?

- - Were similar opportunities and resources available to non-EL peers as well (even if they did not take advantage of them)?

- - Would similar opportunities and resources be made available to the student if they were not classified as EL or were not receiving EL-related language support services?

Prior Subject-Area Knowledge

Students' performance in the classroom depends on multiple factors. Among these is their prior knowledge of the content, which can be determined by engaging students in activities that reveal their relevant background knowledge and familiarity with the topic at hand. (If students are newcomers, these activities should allow for use of the student's dominant language.) If students have robust prior knowledge, they may be able to engage on a par with their non-EL peers even if their English language proficiency is still emerging. In these cases, students may be able to more fully leverage the instructional tasks in which they participate to develop target language uses rather than focus primarily on content understanding (which they may already have). Building background knowledge ensures that students can engage sufficiently with the content-related task, and devote more cognitive resources to second language use and production. It is important for teachers to recognize that all EL students can engage in content practices and learning with their emerging language, and comprehend and carry out sophisticated language functions using less-than-perfect English. By engaging in such practices, EL students can simultaneously build on their content area understandings and their language proficiency (NGSS, 2013).

Continuum of Language Support after Reclassification

While reclassification decisions should be based on the careful and valid analysis of relevant evidence, educators should also consider how academic subject matter classrooms can provide ongoing opportunities for former EL students to continue developing sophisticated language uses. Developing mastery in academic English is an ongoing endeavor for all students. In classrooms where this is recognized, recently exited ELs—like all students— receive language learning support and development opportunities that are matched to and continually expand their language competencies. This is particularly important in light of new federal requirements to monitor and

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report the academic achievement of former ELs during each of the four years after their exit from EL status. It is therefore particularly important to determine the academic schedule and supports that best facilitate recently reclassified students' continued English language development and academic success.

Combining Multiple Sources of Evidence for Reclassification Decision-Making

States will need to set clear policies and procedures for helping local educators combine two or more sources of complementary evidence of English language proficiency in ways that allow for *consistent and appropriate* reclassification decisions. Linquanti and Cook (2015) propose and illustrate a sample "reclassification decision matrix," combining multiple sources of ELP evidence, and including approaches for judging borderline and ambiguous cases.[8] While we do not restate these here, note that these decision rules are critically important, and should ensure that decisions are responsive and appropriate to the ongoing learning needs of students, whether or not they remain classified as EL. As required by ESSA, states should conduct ongoing monitoring of students on either side of the reclassification line to ensure that EL students are neither prematurely exited, nor retained in EL status longer than is appropriate.

Concluding Thoughts: Using Complementary Evidence in Reclassification Decisions

We developed this guidance in response to a national working session of educators and other stakeholders convened to discuss ways of strengthening and standardizing statewide EL reclassification policies and practices. These state and local educators, technical assistance providers, EL researchers, and policy advisers articulated the need for (a) complementary evidence of more interactive language uses not captured by large-scale, summative ELP assessments; and (b) opportunities for local educators—those closest to EL students—to meaningfully participate in reclassification decision-making. We have attempted to honor their insights and suggestions, and offer sample processes and tools that can inform state efforts to develop more robust reclassification policies and procedures. We shared these draft processes and tools with educators in multiple districts and states, and revised them based on their feedback.

The timing of this guidance is particularly salient in light of ESSA provisions that largely support recommendations made by the national working session participants. ESSA calls for standardized statewide EL entry and exit procedures. Draft regulations, if enacted, would require that states use consistent exit criteria and evidence related specifically to English language proficiency. In line with professional standards of educational testing, we maintain that additional sources of evidence complementary to large-scale annual ELP assessments are necessary to ensure valid inferences and appropriate educational decisions for a group of students that are a protected class under federal law. The kinds of tools and processes discussed in this document not only provide this complementary evidence to strengthen decision-making; they can also build educators' capacity to discern, assess, and foster what English learners can do with language while developing conceptual understandings and engaging in disciplinary practices in subject matter classrooms.

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[8]   This includes addressing possible measurement error and illustrating evidence-combination approaches that are compensatory with conjunctive minimums. See Linquanti et al. (2016), p. 99-101.

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Appendix A

Language Use Observation Sheet

Student name: _____ Date:_____

Observer:_____ Subject: _____

Topic: _____

Learning Goal: _____

Activity

Whole class:
☐ Teacher-directed interaction
   (such as modeling, debriefing)
☐ Student-directed interaction
   (such as presentation, debate)

Pair or small group:
☐ Students working independently
☐ Students working together
   (no or intermittent teacher facilitation)
☐ Students working together, facilitated by the teacher

Interaction
☐ Listens and follows along ☐ Responds to teacher only

☐ Initiates a discussion/introduces a topic, different opinion,
   and so on
☐ Works to make his/her ideas comprehensible and
   available to others
☐ Builds on previous turns to build up ideas, meaning,
   or understanding
☐ Helps manage others' participation in the discussion (such
   as by inviting others to join in, outlining an
   issue clearly)
☐ Responds to unexpected/spontaneous questions
   appropriately
☐ Asks for clarification
☐ Provides clarification
☐ Repairs misunderstandings (such as by backtracking,
   reformulating
☐ Other: _____

Classroom language used in the observed lesson

Teacher elicits student responses that are <u>mostly</u>
☐ Words/phrases ☐ A sentence ☐ Connected sentences

Non-ELLs use <u>mostly</u>
☐ Words/phrases ☐ A sentence ☐ Connected sentences

Observed student uses <u>mostly</u>
☐ Words/phrases ☐ A sentence ☐ Connected sentences

*To what extent does the observed student use language
in the ways expected for the task?*
☐ All or most of the time ☐ Some of the time ☐ Rarely

Actual language spoken:

Notes:

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Appendix B

Rubric for evaluating language uses: Interaction, listening, speaking, and reading

The student's command of language indicates to most audiences that he/she:

	Low	Moderate	High
Interaction	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures.	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression.	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers.
Listening	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics.	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos.	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly.
Speaking	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics.	Can connect phrases to talk about familiar topics using simple sentences. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for reactions, opinions, and plans.	Can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points, and finishing with an appropriate conclusion.
Reading	Can read very short, simple texts and find specific, predictable information in everyday materials (such as advertisements, letters, schedules, and menus).	Can understand texts with a familiar organization that include high frequency content-specific language. Begins to understand some idiomatic expressions and words/phrases with multiple meanings.	Can understand long and complex fiction and non-fiction texts on unfamiliar topics, appreciating distinctions of style.

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Rubric for evaluating language uses: Written expression

The student's command of language indicates to most audiences that he/she:

	Low	Moderate	High
Expansion of Repertoires: Cohesion	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and," "but," and "because."	Can link simple and discrete elements into a connected, linear sequence of points. Uses similar language to describe different relationships between ideas (such as additive, causal, sequential, comparative, or conditional).	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of a range of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
Accuracy: Word/ Phrase	Can use basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words, and formulae in order to communicated limited information in familiar situations.	Can use more varied vocabulary that extends beyond the everyday to include some content-specific vocabulary. Can express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on familiar topics.	Can strategically select language to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of academic topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.
Accuracy: Grammar/ Sentence	Can employ some simple structures with minimal or partial consistency. Formulates short, simple sentences with a predictable structure.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used grammatical patterns associated with predictable situations. Uses mostly simple sentences.	Maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot, and generally corrected when they occur. Uses a variety of sentence structures.
Accuracy: Genre Narratives	Can use a series of simple phrases and sentences on familiar topics. Can use linked sentences to provide very short, basic descriptions of events and experiences.	Can produce straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects. Can narrate experiences and events, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text.	Can put forth clear, smoothly flowing stories and descriptions of experiences in a style appropriate to the genre adopted. Uses language effectively to draw in the reader.
Accuracy: Genre Reports & Essays	Can use a series of simple phrases and sentences on familiar topics. Can use linked sentences to provide very short, basic descriptions of known opinions and phenomena.	Can summarize, report, and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar topics and following a standardized format.	Can present information on complex subjects in clear, well-structured text, underlining relevant salient issues. Can expand and support interpretations at some length with subsidiary points, reasons, and relevant examples.
Accuracy: Genre Arguments	Can express a point of view on a familiar topic in a series of simple sentences. Can exchange basic factual information and discuss solutions to familiar problems using simple linked sentences.	Can pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions in brief text following a standardized format.	Can present arguments on complex subjects in clear, well-structured text that may include counter argumentation. Can support arguments at some length with subsidiary points, reasons, and relevant examples.

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Appendix C

Expanded rubric for evaluating language uses: Interaction, listening, speaking, and reading

The student's command of language indicates to most audiences that he/she:

	Low	Low+	Moderate	Moderate+	High	High+
Interaction	Can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help formulate what the learner is trying to say. Can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	Can engage in very short social exchanges, and sustain the conversation with substantial support. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities, possibly using provided language frames or structures.	Can function in most social situations in the classroom. Can enter unprepared in conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest, or connected to everyday life. Can use provided language frames or structures as models for original expression.	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity (without relying on provided language frames or structures) that makes regular interaction with others possible. Can take an active part in academic discussions in familiar contexts and on familiar topics, accounting for and sustaining his/her views.	Can use language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for social and academic purposes. Can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate contributions skillfully to those of other speakers.	Can take part effortlessly in any conversation and discussion, and has good familiarity with idiomatic expressions. Can speak fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. Can quickly and smoothly solve any miscommunication that becomes apparent.
Listening	Can recognize familiar words and basic phrases on familiar topics when people speak slowly and clearly.	Can understand the main point in simple messages in slow and clear standard speech. Can understand phrases and high frequency vocabulary related to familiar topics.	Can understand the main points in slow and clear standard speech on familiar topics in discussions, presentations, and educational videos.	Can understand extended speech and lectures, presentations, and videos and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar.	Can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly.	Has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast speed.

Speaking	Can use simple phrases and sentences to describe familiar topics.	Can use a series of connected phrases and short, simple sentences to talk in simple terms about familiar topics.	Can connect phrases to talk about familiar topics using simple sentences. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for reactions, opinions, and plans.	Can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of familiar subjects. Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points, and finishing with an appropriate conclusion.	Can present clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective structure, which helps the recipient notice significant points.
Reading	Can understand familiar names, words, and very simple sentences, for example on visual representations with little text (such as in posters and ads).	Can read very short, simple texts and find specific, predictable information in everyday materials (such as advertise-ments, letters, schedules, and menus).	Can understand texts with a familiar organization that include high frequency content-specific language. Begins to understand some idiomatic expressions and words/ phrases with multiple meanings.	Can understand non-fiction texts on unfamiliar topics in which the writer adopts a particular attitude or viewpoint. Can identify relevant details in contemporary fiction.	Can understand long and complex fiction and non-fiction texts on unfamiliar topics, appreciating distinctions of style.	Can read with ease virtually all forms of written language, including structurally or linguistically complex texts.

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Expanded rubric for evaluating language uses: Written expression

The student's command of language indicates to most audiences that he/she:

	Low	Low+	Moderate	Moderate+	High	High+
Expansion of Repertoires: Cohesion	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then."	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and," "but," and "because."	Can link simple and discrete elements into a connected, linear sequence of points. Uses similar language to describe different relationships between ideas (such as additive, causal, sequential, comparative, or conditional).	Can use a growing number of cohesive devices to link his/her statements into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a longer text.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of a range of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
Accuracy: Word/Phrase	Can use high frequency words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Can use basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words, and formulae in order to communi-cated limited information in familiar situa-tions.	Can use more varied vocabulary that extends beyond the everyday to include some content-specific vocabulary. Can express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on familiar topics.	Has sufficient range of language to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words.	Can strategically select language to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of academic topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Shows great flexibility in reformulating ideas to effectively convey finer shades of meaning, emphasize, differentiate, and clarify. Uses appropriately many idiomatic expressions.
Accuracy: Grammar/Sentence	Has some control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire.	Can employ some simple structures with minimal or partial consistency. Formulates short, simple sentences with a predictable structure.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used grammatical patterns associated with predictable situations. Uses mostly simple sentences.	Shows relative-ly high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors that cause mis-understanding and can correct most of his/her mistakes. Uses simple and some complex sentences.	Maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot, and generally corrected when they occur. Uses a variety of sentence structures.	Maintains grammatical accuracy when using complex language, even when attention is otherwise engaged (e.g., in forward planning or monitoring others' reactions). Uses a range of grammar and sentence structures strategically.

Accuracy: Genre **Narratives**	Can use simple phrases and sentences about familiar topics.	Can use a series of simple phrases and sentences on familiar topics. Can use linked sentences to provide very short, basic descriptions of events and experiences.	Can produce straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects. Can narrate experiences and events, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text.	Can produce clear, detailed descriptions of experiences and events. Can follow established genre conventions in marking relationships between ideas and organizing the text.	Can put forth clear, smoothly flowing stories and descriptions of experiences in a style appropriate to the genre adopted. Uses language effectively to draw in the reader.
Accuracy: Genre **Reports & Essays**	Can use simple phrases and sentences about familiar topics.	Can use a series of simple phrases and sentences on familiar topics. Can use linked sentences to provide very short, basic descriptions of known opinions and phenomena.	Can summarize, report, and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar topics, following a standardized format.	Can develop an idea with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem and synthesize information from a number of sources.	Can present information on complex subjects in clear, well-structured text, underlining relevant salient issues. Can expand and support interpretations at some length with subsidiary points, reasons, and relevant examples.
Accuracy: Genre **Arguments**	Can use simple phrases to express an opinion on a familiar topic.	Can express a point of view on a familiar topic in a series of simple sentences. Can exchange basic factual information and discuss solutions to familiar problems using simple linked sentences.	Can pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions in brief text following a standardized format.	Can develop an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explain the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesize arguments from a number of sources.	Can present arguments on complex subjects in clear, well-structured text that may include counter argumentation. Can support arguments at some length with subsidiary points, reasons, and relevant examples.

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