

# **Section V**

## **Reclassification of English Learners to Fluent English Proficient**

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**Understanding Reclassification of English Learners  
to Fluent English Proficient**

**Decision Guide: Reclassifying a Student from English  
Learner to Fluent English Proficient**

**Guidelines for Reclassification of English Learners**

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# Understanding Reclassification of English Learners To Fluent English Proficient

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*Education Code* Section 306 defines “English learner” as “a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English...” Reclassification is the process by which students who have been identified as English learners are reclassified to fluent English proficient (RFEP) when they have demonstrated that they are able to compete effectively with English-speaking peers in mainstream classes. Under current law, identified English learners must participate in the annual administration of the CELDT until they are reclassified.

This section contains two documents that illustrate the reclassification process:

- *Guidelines for Reclassification of English Learners* provides detailed information about each of the reclassification criteria
- *Decision Guide: Reclassifying a Student from English Learner to Fluent English Proficient* is a flowchart of the reclassification process.

## Reclassification Guidelines

The State Board of Education (SBE) has established four reclassification criteria, based on *Education Code* Section 313(d), for school districts to use in reclassifying students from English learner to fluent English proficient. The *Guidelines for Reclassification of English Learners*, approved by the SBE in September 2002, describes these four reclassification criteria. The first criterion is an assessment of English-language proficiency, which in California is the CELDT. The next criterion is teacher evaluation of a student's academic performance, which can be based on the student's report card grades, grade point average (GPA), or other measure that school districts use to determine students' academic performance. The third criterion is parent opinion and consultation, which involves parents or guardians, if possible, in a discussion about their student's English-language proficiency and meeting the guidelines for reclassification. The fourth and final criterion is a comparison of performance in basic skills, which the SBE has indicated should be based on results of the student's latest California English-Language Arts Standards Test (CST in English-language arts).

The reclassification process is determined locally, using the four criteria. That process may differ from school district to school district, depending on when needed data are available. Typically, CST results are available at the beginning of the school year, and CELDT results for the annual assessment are available in December or January. (The reclassification guidelines are provided on pages V-4 through V-6.)

# Suggested Steps for Reclassification

The second document in this section is the *Decision Guide: Reclassifying a Student from English Learner to Fluent English Proficient* that is based on the four criteria set forth in the reclassification guidelines approved by the SBE. This flowchart walks through each step of the reclassification process. At each step, two bullets are listed that tell school staffs (1) where to look for the data to see if the student meets this criterion and (2) what standard the student needs to achieve to meet this criterion (and whether the school district may set its own policy).

The first step in the process is to review the annual CELDT results for English-language proficiency. For this criterion, the student needs to meet the CELDT definition of proficiency, which is an overall score of early advanced or advanced, and scores are intermediate or above for each of the sub-skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. If the student meets this criterion, move on to the next step in the chart. If not, the student should remain an English learner.

The second step in the reclassification process is to review the comparison of performance in basic skills. This review focuses on the student's results on the latest CST in English-language arts. The SBE has set a guideline for this cut point at somewhere between basic and midpoint of basic, but it is up to each school district to set an exact cut point. If the student meets this criterion, move on to the next step in the decision chart. If this criterion is not met, the student should remain an English learner.

The third step in the process is a review of the teacher evaluation of student academic performance. This review looks at whether the student meets the academic performance indicators set by the school district. Academic indicators could include the student's grades or whatever criteria the school district has established as its policy for evaluating academic performance. If the student meets the academic performance indicators established by the school district, move on to the next step in the flowchart. If not, the student should remain an English learner.

The fourth step in the process is parental opinion and consultation. If the student has satisfied all criteria for reclassification, then notice should be provided to parents and guardians of their rights to participate in the reclassification process. The notice also should encourage their participation in this process.

Finally, the student should be reclassified to fluent English proficient (RFEP). As part of this process, parents and guardians should be notified, school records should be updated, and the student's progress should be monitored for two years. Monitoring does not mean that the CELDT (e.g., scores on CST in English-language arts) should be administered again; rather, the student's academic achievement and progress should be monitored to be certain the student is continuing to progress. If the student fails to progress, it is necessary to intervene and not allow him or her to fall behind. (The decision guide is provided on page V-7.)

# Guidelines for Reclassification of English Learners

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## Assessment of English-Language Proficiency

Use the CELDT as the primary criterion. Consider for reclassification those students whose overall proficiency level is early advanced or higher and:

- Listening is intermediate or higher,
- Speaking is intermediate or higher,
- Reading is intermediate or higher, and
- Writing is intermediate or higher.

Those students whose overall proficiency level is in the upper end of the intermediate level also may be considered for reclassification if additional measures determine the likelihood that a student is proficient in English.

- Use most recent available test data.

The above reclassification levels are the same as the initial identification levels specified by the CDE.

## Teacher Evaluation

- Use student's academic performance.
- Note that incurred deficits in motivation and academic success unrelated to English-language proficiency do not preclude a student from reclassification.

## Parent Opinion and Consultation

- Provide notice to parents or guardians of their right and encourage them to participate in the reclassification process.
- Provide an opportunity for a face-to-face meeting with parents or guardians.

# Comparison of Performance in Basic Skills

## ■ Definitions:

1. **“Performance in basic skills”** means the score and/or performance level resulting from a recent administration of the California English-Language Arts Standards Test (CST in English-language arts).
2. **“Range of performance in basic skills”** means a range of scores on the CST in English-language arts corresponding to a performance level or a range within a performance level.
3. **“Pupils of the same age”** refers to pupils who are enrolled in the same grade as the student who is being considered for reclassification.

## ■ Basic skills criteria:

1. A pupil’s score on the CST in English-language arts in the range from the beginning of basic level up to the midpoint of the basic level suggests that the pupil may be sufficiently prepared to participate effectively in the curriculum and should be considered for reclassification. School districts may select a cut point in this range.
2. Pupils with scores above the cut point selected by the school district should be considered for reclassification.
3. For pupils scoring below the cut point, school districts should attempt to determine whether factors other than English-language proficiency are responsible for low performance on the CST in English-language arts and whether it is reasonable to reclassify the student.
4. For pupils in grade twelve, the eleventh grade CST in English-language arts results should be used, if available.
5. For pupils in grades one and two, school districts should base a decision to reclassify on CELDT results, teacher evaluation, parent consultation, and other locally available assessment results. Kindergarten students who have been identified as English learners probably should not be reclassified.
6. School districts must monitor pupil performance for two years after reclassification in accordance with existing California regulations and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

# Decision Guide: Reclassifying a Student from English Learner to Fluent English Proficient

School districts **are to** develop student reclassification policy and procedures based on the four criteria set forth in the reclassification guidelines approved by the State Board of Education (*Education Code* Section 313(d)). The chart below illustrates how the four criteria can be used by school districts/schools when evaluating a student's readiness for reclassification from English learner (EL) to fluent English proficient (RFEP).

