

**Series 2003-2004**  
**Circular Letter C-14**

**TO:** Superintendents, Principals, Bilingual Education Directors, English as a Second Language (ESL) Administrators and Educators in districts with English Language Learners (ELLs)

**FROM:** Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** September 13, 2002

**SUBJECT:** Guidelines for Implementing Language Transition Support Services in Connecticut's School Districts

Enclosed for your use are Guidelines for Implementing Language Transition Support Services required as of September 2002, for students exiting mandated bilingual education programs. The requirement for providing these services is found in Sec. 10-17f of the Connecticut General Statutes. This section was amended as part of the overall revisions to our bilingual education statute (Sec. 10-17e-j, inclusive) in 1999.

Students are placed in bilingual education programs because they are classified as limited English proficient (LEP) and are part of a group of twenty or more students in the same school building of the same language background. The statute requires that they be tested annually for progress in English language proficiency and academic achievement and that they leave the program after thirty months. Those students who do not meet the English mastery standard on the annual assessment at the end of thirty months must be given **language transition support services (LTSS)**. The first group of students who will be statutorily entitled to such services will enter the mainstream educational program in the 2002-2003 school year.

Since the statute is only suggestive regarding required language transition support services, the twenty school districts with mandated bilingual education programs requested that the State Department of Education provide them with guidance for organizing and implementing LTSS. At the same time, school districts with English as a second language (ESL) programs also expressed interest in such guidelines for their own use. Accordingly, a team of bilingual education and ESL educators was assembled to develop the guidelines.

While it was recognized by the development team that the Guidelines would have a wider application, members stressed the need for students in LTSS to continue the progress they had made during their thirty months in the bilingual education program. Moreover, team members representing bilingual education and ESL programs agreed strongly that LTSS and any educational services and programs for ELLs must endeavor to provide instruction that is both enriched and accelerated in order to enable the ELLs to attain the same high level of academic performance in English expected of all students.

To this end, team members provided specific guidance in three areas: the types of activities that LTSS should comprise on the district and school levels, the human and material resources that districts need to deploy in implementing LTSS, and the types of comprehensive and long-term professional development needed to sustain effective programs and services for ELLs over time.

The LTSS Guidelines come at a particularly important time for schools in Connecticut. Connecticut has in excess of 21,000 ELLs from approximately one hundred language groups in its schools, even though Spanish-speaking students account for more than 90% of the State's ELLs. While still concentrated in the large urban districts, the last five years have seen a growing number of ELLs enrolling in suburban and rural school districts resulting in requests for assistance from more and more school districts. In addition, the recent enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 by the United States Congress places greater demands upon school districts for educating ELLs to higher standards.

Among those demands is accountability for the achievement of English proficiency by LEP students. The No Child Left Behind Act<sup>1</sup> requires that as of school year 2002-2003 all LEP students served in the State's schools must be assessed annually in the areas of English oral language, reading and writing. This includes LEP students in grades pre-K through 12<sup>2</sup>. This requirement was brought to your attention in letters from Abigail Hughes, Associate Commissioner of the Division of Evaluation and Research, on July 25 and August 27, 2002. To meet this requirement, school districts must administer the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) to all LEP students in May of each year. Students receiving LTSS will undergo this annual assessment since they are classified as LEP.

As a complement to the Guidelines, Connecticut will be offering an extensive program of professional development conferences and workshops for educators of ELLs in the 2002-2003 school year through a contract with the Special Education Resource Center in Middletown. Many of the activities have been especially tailored for mainstream classroom teachers who have little or no experience in educating ELLs. For further information contact Erin McGurk at (860) 632-1485, extension 374.

In summary, it is hoped that these Guidelines will provide districts with some of the more comprehensive assistance that they need and have requested in educating this population. For questions or more information contact George DeGeorge at (860) 713-6750, Frances Rabinowitz at (860) 713-6707 or Betty Sternberg at (860) 713-6701.

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Enc.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 1111(b)(7).

<sup>2</sup> See Section 9101(1)(25)(A).