



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



New Flexibility for English Learners

Information for Teachers

In its recent application for renewal of ESEA Flexibility (i.e., the “waiver”), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) received additional flexibilities with respect to “recently arrived” English learners (ELs) in tested grades. “Recently arrived” ELs are those students whose initial entry date in a U.S. school is less than two years (i.e., 24 months) prior to test administration.

The new EL flexibility granted to Connecticut requires that “recently arrived” ELs be assessed in all content areas. However, student scores in Year 1 will serve as a baseline measure that will not be included in a school’s academic achievement (status) measure for accountability purposes. Instead, Connecticut will use the baseline score of “recently arrived” ELs in Year 1 to determine growth in Year 2. Growth in Year 2 will be an important component of school accountability calculations, and for a second time, achievement status for “recently arrived” ELs in their second year will not be included in school accountability calculations. In Year 3, status **AND** growth will be included in school accountability calculations. This change requires that all “recently arrived” ELs test in all content areas annually so that baseline performance can be established. **Regardless of time in a U.S. school all ELs are counted toward meeting each school’s 95 percent participation requirement in all tested areas.**

In summary, the EL flexibility allows us to extend the time that ELs can be considered “recently arrived.” In the old system, an EL was considered “recently arrived” for only 12 months. The new system allows us to carry the “recently arrived” designation for 24 months. This is a critical shift because our new flexibility allows us to exclude scores of “recently arrived” ELs from the achievement status measure of the school accountability system. In the old system, we excluded scores for one test administration, but now we exclude for two test administrations giving students more time to demonstrate what they know and can do.

1. What is the rationale for the new flexibility?

This approach includes all of our ELs in the system and delays the incorporation of scores of recently arrived ELs in the achievement status measure until the third year, but rightly values growth over time in the second year. All of these students will continue to be counted toward meeting the 95 percent participation requirement in all subjects.

2. How is the new flexibility for ELs different from what was previously practiced?

Prior to 2015-16	Beginning in 2015-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut policy allowed an exemption from the English language arts portion of statewide assessments for any English Learner (EL) enrolled for the first time in a U.S. school for fewer than 12 calendar months when the testing window began. • Recently arrived ELs participated in the state English proficiency test, the state mathematics assessment and the state science assessment. • Recently arrived EL student scores were not included in the accountability determinations for any subject in the first year. • Recently arrived EL students were counted toward meeting the 95 percent participation requirement in mathematics and science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut’s ESEA flexibility requires all recently arrived ELs to participate in all content areas of the state assessment: English language arts/literacy and mathematics in Grades 3-8 and 11; and science in Grades 5, 8 and 10. • Recently arrived ELs must participate in the state English proficiency test. • Recently arrived EL student scores will be included in the accountability system in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Year 1—Baseline score established, but school’s achievement status calculations unaffected. ○ Year 2—Growth measure established when comparing Year 2 scores to baseline. Growth included in school accountability calculations, but achievement status calculations unaffected. ○ Year 3—Student scores used in school’s academic achievement (status) measure and the school’s growth measure. • Recently arrived EL students will be included in participation calculations for meeting the 95 percent participation requirement in all subjects beginning in Year 1.

3. How is recently arrived EL status defined?

A student is identified as a recently arrived EL for two state test administrations within 24 months from the first registration in the Public school information System (PSIS).

4. What accessibility features are available to EL students taking the Smarter Balanced Assessments in Grades 3-8?

All EL students are eligible with educator endorsement to receive designated supports during testing.

These include:

- Translation Math Glossaries in a variety of languages.
- Translation of Test Directions for both, ELA/Literacy and Math in a variety of languages.
- Bilingual dictionary for ELA/Literacy writing portion.

- Translation Math Stacked in Spanish in which the entire math test is translated in Spanish.
- Read Aloud of the entire math test in Spanish.

5. What accessibility features are available to EL students taking the Grade 11 assessments?

The accessibility features available to EL students taking the Grade 11 assessments are to be determined.

6. What happens if a recently arrived EL does not take the Smarter Balanced test?

If the student does not log into the computer-adaptive test (CAT) and the Performance Task (PT), he/she will be considered absent and a non-participant.

If the student logs into the CAT **and** the PT for each subject area, but does not answer any questions, the student will be considered a participant, but will earn the lowest possible score.

7. Who can I contact for more information?

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