



Exit Criteria and Reclassification of English Language Learners

Reclassification is a term that describes the process used to determine when English learners (ELs) transition from one EL designation to another. The most common reclassification happens when an identified EL student transitions to Fluent English Proficient (FEP), triggering an exit from the EL program. This determination is an indicator that the student can participate successfully in academic classes without additional EL supports.


In effect, exit from EL status is a high-stakes decision because premature exit could place an English learner at risk of academic failure, while unnecessary prolongation of EL status (particularly at the secondary level) can limit educational opportunities¹. It is critical that the process for reclassification includes strong evidence to demonstrate that language is no longer a barrier to achievement and that the student is performing on par with native English speakers in academic content classes where English is the language of instruction.

English learners in New Hampshire exit the ELD program and automatically reclassify into “monitor” status under the following circumstances:

Standard Reclassification Methods:

Typically, reclassification happens when a student “tests-out” or reaches the state approved measure of English language proficiency as outlined in the consolidated state plan².


Assessment	Exit Criteria
WIDA ACCESS	overall composite score ≥ 4.5



ELs with Disabilities—taking the ACCESS Test:

For EL students who are waived from taking one or two domains of the ACCESS test due to an identified disability, as identified in the student’s current IEP, the WIDA [Less Than Four Domains Calculation Tool](#)³ should be used to calculate the student’s alternate overall Composite Scale Scores (aoCSS).

Assessment	State-Approved Exit Criteria
WIDA ACCESS w/ missing domain scores	aoCSS ≥ 4.5



Automatic reclassification of EL student from active to “Monitor” status for four years.

¹ Rhinehart, Bailey, & Haager, 2022

² <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/nhconsolidatedstateplanfinal.pdf>

³ WIDA, “Less Than Four Domains Calculation Tool” is available for download in the [WIDA Secure Portal](#)

ELs with Disabilities—taking the Alternate ACCESS Test:

For EL students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the Alternate ACCESS assessment is used. The Alternate ACCESS assessment is intended for ELs who participate in the NH Dynamic Learning Maps alternate assessment as determined by the student’s IEP team.

Assessment	State-Approved Exit Criteria
WIDA Alternate ACCESS	overall proficiency level of P2



Automatic reclassification of EL student from active to “Monitor” status for four years.

Non-Standard Reclassification/Exit Options:

There are also a few non-standard ways that EL students can qualify for reclassification. All of the non-standard options require additional evidence and submission of a formal request to the NHED. Non-standard reclassification may be considered for students under the following circumstances.

ELs with Disabilities—taking the Alternate ACCESS Test:

School-based student study teams have the option to request non-standard consideration for reclassification of ELs with disabilities if the student:

- obtains an overall proficiency level of P1 on the Alternate ACCESS assessment; AND
- has been enrolled in a Language Instruction Educational Program (i.e., “EL program”) for at least four consecutive years.

Assessment	State-Approved Optional Exit Criteria
WIDA Alternate ACCESS	overall proficiency level of P1; AND four years of consecutive enrollment in EL program



IEP team can request non-standard request for reclassification

Correcting Errors in Initial Identification/Classification

The NHED acknowledges that misidentification of English learners can occasionally occur. For example, the Home Language Survey (HLS) may be misinterpreted by parents/guardians or by the school personnel reviewing the information which could lead to misidentification. The same misinterpretation is possible as educators review initial screener assessment scores also resulting in misidentification.

Incomplete or Inconsistent English Language Proficiency Data

In rare circumstances where data from the state approved ELP assessment is believed to be incomplete or inconsistent with student's typical performance, a school-based team can initiate the process for nonstandard consideration to request reclassification of a student.

If a student is eligible for non-standard reclassification under one of the scenarios summarized in this section, please refer to the guidance and procedures outlined by the NHED in the "Request for Reclassification of EL Students" document.

Monitoring:

In NH, as outlined in the consolidated state plan⁴, students who are reclassified remain in “monitor” status four years after initial reclassification before eventually transitioning to “Fluent English Proficient” (FEP) or “full exit” status. This is true for any student who was reclassified through either standard or non-standard methods.

During the four years of required monitoring, districts must ensure that ELs who were recently reclassified do not struggle academically as a result of persistent language barriers. To meet this obligation, districts must develop a system to track student progress in all core academic classes including feedback from core academic teachers on a quarterly basis throughout the school year (i.e., with sufficient frequency to preclude a student falling significantly behind).

⁴ <https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/files/inline-documents/essaconsolidatednhstateplan.pdf>