

Section 8.2 English Language Learners

Although the nature of the RTI Pyramid indicates all students begin at Tier 1 and move upward through the tiers only if the interventions at the previous tiers are not sufficient to allow them to achieve, Title III under NCLB does not permit delayed eligibility testing for language minority students. Neither should language assistance be delayed in order to allow students to progress "normally" through the tiers. (See section on Eligibility)

Eligibility for ESOL services automatically should be considered a Tier 4 Intervention.

- For the purposes of serving the student effectively and efficiently, the language minority student enters the Pyramid at the Tier 4 and as the student progresses with language development and academic proficiency, the level of interventions needed to support the student will decrease accordingly.
- However, it is also important to remember that many ESOL students spend most of their school day in the general classroom with accommodations provided according to the ELL/TPC. During this time in the general classroom, ESOL students should receive the same Tier 1 interventions as other students in the class.
- The accommodations provided in the Presentation or Response categories of the ELL/TPC are considered Tier 2 interventions appropriate to the student's English language proficiency needs and improvement in language development and academic achievement should be noted as data for progress monitoring results.

For the purposes of ESOL services as support for second language acquisition and development, the RTI Pyramid functions as a regressive model, rather than as a model of progressive interventions.

- As students near grade level proficiency, it is probable that Tier 1 interventions, appropriate for all students, will be the only additional support needed.
- These students face unique obstacles, due to their lack of English proficiency, and it is essential that they receive immediate services and assistance in order to provide them with the educational support they require.

Educators are attuned to the fact that ELLs need immediate social and content language development and support and understand the need to provide ELLs with more targeted interventions than those to be provided to all students. **Although Tier 2 is a good entry level for many at-risk groups, the specially designed learning focus of Tier 4, with its emphasis on specialized programs and specialized instructional delivery and methodology, describes the basic tenets of ESOL instruction.**

Although ELLs are considered to be at the Tier 4 level when eligible for ESOL services, this does not preclude those ELLs who are found to need additional support from receiving it through the SST process or, when they meet eligibility criteria, through Special Education. These programs would support and supplement the specialized language acquisition interventions of the ESOL program, as well as address any other learning problems that may have been identified.

Additional Information regarding the Title III ESOL program can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website: http://www.gadoe.org/ci_iap_esol.aspx

Q & A Regarding ESOL Instruction:

1. **Can we adjust our amount of time for our ESOL segments so that they fit our RTI model?**
The ESOL Program is a state funded mandate that carries a FTE weight. For funding purposes, the segments must meet the minimum allotted time designated in the chart.
2. **What is the advantage of “sheltered” instruction?** Sheltered instruction is a content area course with a class composed only of ELLs and taught by a teacher who holds certification in the appropriate content area, along with the ESOL endorsement or ESOL certification, and who has a background in second language acquisition. This training allows the students to benefit from instruction that will be targeted specifically to their needs as English language learners and that will ensure that the GPS for the content course are being met.

Purpose of the ESOL Program:

The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program is designed to serve students in grades K-12 whose first language is one other than English and who have been determined to lack English language proficiency in social and academic instructional language. The program is designed to provide students with targeted language support during the lengthy process of second language acquisition.

English language learners face unique challenges in the classroom as they strive to learn academic content at the same time they are developing their initial English language skills. Many of these students have a history of interrupted or limited formal schooling; therefore, they may not have had the opportunity to develop literacy skills and content knowledge in their primary or home language.

ELLs need strong support in the content areas which can be offered by means of targeted interventions, accommodations, elective courses, or differentiated instruction in required courses by a classroom teacher who holds the ESOL Endorsement and has been trained to understand English proficiency levels, utilizing the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards to differentiate instruction for ELLs. Teachers whose classes contain ELLs, but who do not hold the ESOL Endorsement, should receive specific training regarding instructional strategies that support the second language learner.

Instructional Staff:

All ESOL teachers must be certified teachers, but the certification requirements may vary depending on the courses taught. If a teacher is assigned to teach ESOL language acquisition courses, those beginning with a course number with the 55 prefix, the teacher must hold appropriate grade level certification in any content field and the ESOL Endorsement **or** full ESOL certification. The ESOL I-IV courses are ELA courses and as such must be taught by a teacher with English Language Arts certification as well as either the ESOL Endorsement or ESOL certification. If a teacher is assigned to teach a sheltered content course for English language learners, the teacher must hold the appropriate content area certification as well as either the ESOL Endorsement or ESOL certification. A sheltered class is defined as any content course which is composed solely of ELLs, taught, following the GPS of the content course, by a teacher with ESOL credentials, and is assigned the state approved content course number.

Eligibility:

Students whose answers on the Home Language Survey indicate a primary, first or home language other than English must be assessed for eligibility for ESOL services. This screening must be complete within the first 30 days of the school year. If a student enters school after the 30 day period, the assessment must be done within the first two weeks of enrollment. It is the expectation of GaDOE Title III ESOL that students will be assessed as soon as logistically possible within the appropriate time frames.

Upon enrollment in a school, all students entering grades K-12 should be administered the Home Language Survey to determine if a student has a primary language other than English. The Home Language Survey consists of three questions:

What was the language(s) the student first learned to speak?

What language(s) does the student speak at home?

What language(s) does the student speak most often?

Any student who answers one or more of the 3 questions with a language other than English must be screened using the WIDA-Access Proficiency Test (W-APT) to determine eligibility for language assistance services. The W-APT screener, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the WIDA Consortium, of which Georgia is a member, is a research-based instrument utilized by the 18 states that are members of the WIDA Consortium.

Students who score less than a proficiency level of 5.0 on the W-APT are considered to be English language learners (ELLs) and are eligible for ESOL services. A proficiency level of less than 5.0 indicates interventions the student will need language and academic support during the language development process.

Support may be individualized or may be offered through classes or resources available to all students, such as before- or after-school tutoring, preview sessions, or support courses. The ESOL teacher, in collaboration with the content teachers, guidance counselor and appropriate administrators, can and should assist in determining and designing appropriate interventions and supports for ELLs. Working in collaboration, these professionals serve the educational interests of the ELLs in the capacity of the Language Assessment Committee (LAC) team to ensure that ELLs are properly supported during the language proficiency development period.

ESOL Instructional Delivery Models:

There are six state approved instructional models through which ESOL students are served.

- Pull-out model outside the academic block- students receive small group language instruction
- Push-in model within the academic block – students remain in the classroom and receive content instruction from their content area teacher along with language assistance from the ESOL teacher
- Cluster center model to which students from two or more schools are transported for instruction in a program designed for intensive language assistance
- Resource center/laboratory model - students receive assistance in a group setting supplemented by multimedia materials
- Scheduled class period – students at the middle and high school levels receive language assistance and/or content instruction in a class composed of ELLs only;
- Another alternative model approved in advance by the Department of Education Title III ESOL unit

Class Size for ESOL:

Grade(s) / Subject(s)	Funding Class Size	Maximum System Average in class with No Paraprofessional	Maximum System Average in class with Paraprofessional
K-3	7	11	13
4-8	7	14	15
9-12	7	18	20

If the ESOL teacher “pushes in” to a grade level or content class for an inclusion setting, the overall class size is that of the general education grade limits, but the ESOL class size limits still apply for the number of ELLs permitted in the class.

Instructional Segments:

Grades	Required Minutes Daily or Weekly per Segment	Maximum Number of ESOL FTE Segments Allowable
K-3	Daily=45; Weekly=225	1
4-8	Daily=50; Weekly=250	(Up to) 2
9-12	Daily=55; Weekly=275	(Up to) 5 (*90 minute Block = 2)

Assessment:

English Language Learners (ELLs) must be assessed for proficiency on an annual basis, using the state approved assessment, *ACCESS for ELLs*. If students reach a Composite Proficiency Level of 5.0 or higher on Tier C of the *ACCESS* they are considered proficient in English and will be exited from the program. If students score between 4.0 and 4.9 on Tier C of the *ACCESS* and meet or exceed standards on the grade level state mandated competency assessment, a Language Assessment Committee (LAC) may be convened and determine that the student should be exited from language assistance services. All students who exit the ESOL program must be monitored for two calendar years following their program exit.

