

# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

## FAQs on Incorporating ELL/MLL Progress into the NYSED Accountability System using a Transition Matrix

## INTRODUCTION

New York State is using seven indicators as part of its overall ESSA plan, and this includes an indicator for English Language Proficiency (ELP). To ensure that English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs) are showing adequate progress, NYSED is using a growth model that is based on student performance on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). This Q & A addresses frequent concerns and questions that NYSED has received regarding the ELP growth model that is being used for ESSA.

## ELP INDICATOR DETERMINATION

**Q:** What is a Transition Matrix?

**A:** A “transition matrix”, also known as a value table, is a method of measuring English Language Proficiency (ELP) progress. A value table uses a grid with multiple rows and columns. The first column of the grid represents a student’s starting point (initial NYSESLAT score). Each row corresponds to the possible initial scores. The remaining columns in the grid display the expected progress in subsequent years. A value table summarizes three important elements for monitoring EL progress towards English proficiency: one, the initial English language proficiency; two, given a student’s initial proficiency, the time expected to reach English language proficiency; and three, given the initial proficiency, the annual progress a student should make in order to reach proficiency in a timely manner.

**Q:** What is the difference between a value table and value added model?

**A:** Although both models can be used to measure ELP growth over time, the value table is very different from a value-added model (VAM). A value table uses a grid to ascribe points to the difference in ELP level between Year 1 and Year 0, whereas a VAM uses a statistical formula to measure a teacher or school’s contribution to student growth. A key difference between a value table and a VAM is that a VAM is based on relative performance, while a value table is based on a fixed criterion. In order to avoid confusion, NYSED will refer to its ELP indicator as a transition matrix.

**Q:** Why was the transition matrix chosen over the other potential models of ELL progress?

**A:** NYSED examined a number of models based on various aspects, such as NYSED’s Theory of Action (ToA), context within the State, and robustness. The transition matrix was chosen because it is considered to be the most transparent model in terms of how it can be communicated to stakeholders, it allows the State to consider various factors that affect English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner (ELL/MLL) progress, such as age and Student with Interrupted or Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE) status, the model will work with the type of assessment that is used to measure ELP, and it shows satisfactory robustness for

variations in background characteristics.

**Q:** Why was transparency a fundamental aspect in determining the model for ELL/MLL progress?

**A:** Transparency was a fundamental aspect of the decision making process because we want to make sure that stakeholders understand the model that is being used for accountability purposes. Transition matrices are considered to be straightforward because the number of points that are awarded are based on the difference between the current year's proficiency level and the previous year's proficiency level. Importantly, a student or school's performance based on a value table can be calculated at the school with the data that a school has in their possession.

**Q:** What kinds of analyses were conducted to ensure robustness of the model?

**A:** Robustness was determined through analyses of existing NYSED data. Specifically, NYSED compared the results of data from varying school levels and student background characteristics. The findings showed that value tables provided consistent results regardless of school level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) and student background (i.e., ethnicity, socioeconomic status. Importantly, a value table neither disadvantages nor advantages a school for having a higher and lower number of percent of ELs enrolled.

**Q:** Students at different levels of ELP may progress at different rates. Will the transition matrix model take into account differences in rates of growth?

**A:** Yes. NYSED has chosen the transition matrix because it will allow the State to take into account different rates of growth at various levels of initial proficiency.

**Q:** What assessment data will be used to measure ELL/MLL progress?

**A:** Results from the NYSESLAT will be used for the transition matrix model. In 2015, a new version of the NYSESLAT was administered to ELL/MLL students in New York State. Assessment results from 2015 onward are comparable from year to year.

**Q:** Why are NYSESLAT results, and not NYSITELL results, used to measure ELL/MLL progress?

**A:** The purpose of the NYSITELL is to determine whether a student should receive ELL/MLL services, and is only given to a student once for that purpose. The NYSITELL is given to a student within two weeks of being identified as a possible ELL/MLL, and can therefore be given at any point in the school year. In other words, the administration window is not standardized. In contrast, the purpose of the NYSESLAT is to determine a student's progress towards and acquisition of English Language Proficiency and is given at the same time each year. The NYSITELL is also a much shorter assessment than the NYSESLAT, and results of the NYSITELL should not be compared to the NYSESLAT for the purposes of growth.

**Q: What happens if a student is identified as an ELL/MLL by the NYSITELL and then exits ELL/MLL status in the same year?**

**A:** In some instances, a student may be identified as an ELL/MLL by the NYSITELL, and then exits ELL status by either scoring Commanding on the NYSESLAT or scoring Expanding on the NYSESLAT and reaching a certain level of English proficiency on the 3-8 ELA Assessment or passing the Regents English exam in the current year. In that instance, the student is considered to have met the expected progress for the ELP model and their progress is counted toward a school's success ratio.

**Q: How does the model take into account students who enter a school at different levels of English proficiency?**

**A:** The transition matrix takes into account various trajectories of growth based on initial ELP level, so schools are not unfairly penalized if students enter their schools with low ELP levels.

**Q: Has NYSED compared existing data to information from the transition matrix?**

**A:** The expectations for progress that are included in the transition matrix were originally created using existing data from New York State students. The Department tested the Transition Matrix using 2016-17 NYSESLAT data, which allowed NYSED to identify any extreme variances in the results in order to understand how such variance may occur and to adjust the system's analysis accordingly. The Department will carefully monitor the results of the 2017-18 data model as well.

**Q: What are the challenges associated with using the transition matrix?**

**A:** One of the major challenges associated with any progress model is the communication strategy associated with how results are determined. NYSED will request assistance from the State's Technical Assistance Committee and other experts in the field to best communicate its strategy to the field.

**Q: Will there be any follow up to reconvene stakeholders after the model is in place?**

**A:** Yes, NYSED plans to reconvene with stakeholders after two years to ensure that the model is functioning appropriately with for its intended consequences.

**Q: How can a student show sufficient progress for their English language proficiency (ELP) growth?**

**A: Students have three opportunities to earn credit:**

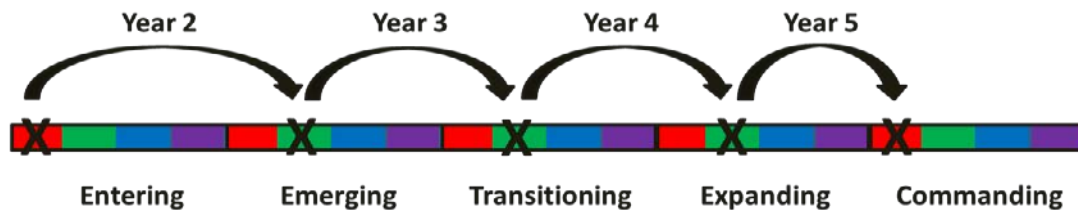
- 1) Exit ELL status, either by (1) reaching Commanding on the NYSESLAT or by (2) reaching Expanding on the NYSESLAT and Proficient Grades 3-8 New York State Testing Program

- Assessment in English or passing the Regents English exam in the current year.
- 2) Meet the growth expectations for each year based on initial ELP:

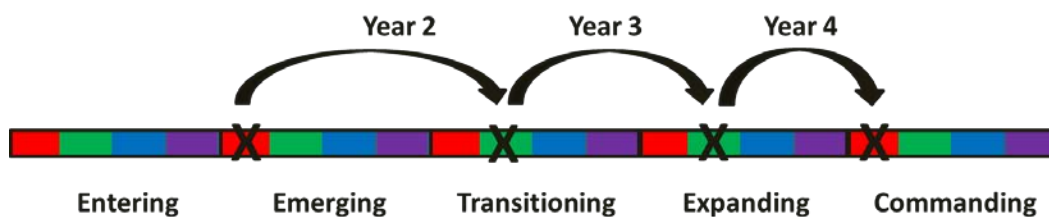
	Year			
	2	3	4	5
Initial ELP	2	3	4	5
Entering	1.25	1	1	0.75
Emerging	1.25	1	0.75	
Transitioning	1	1		
Expanding	1			

- 3) Meet the level targets (also referred to as Safe Harbor) for each year based on initial ELP. In the following examples, the X's mark where a student begins, and the next level that is targeted for each subsequent year:

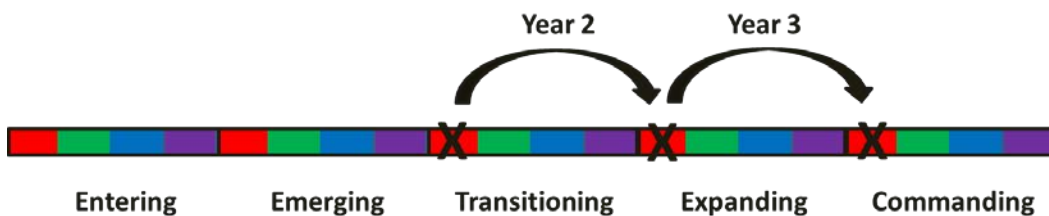
Initially Entering:



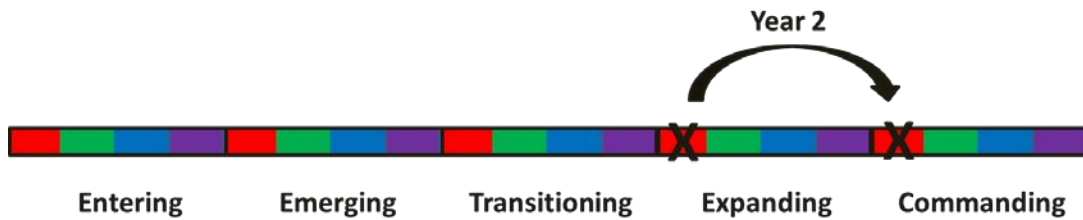
Initially Emerging:



Initially Transitioning:



Initially Expanding:



**Q:** If a student does not exit ELL status within the target timeline, can they still earn credit for growth?

**A:** Yes, for students who have passed the expected number of years to exit ELL status, they can still show growth by making 0.75 progress points per year, or reaching Commanding.

**Q:** What happens when a student regresses?

**A:** A student who regresses in their English Proficiency as measured by the NYSESLAT is treated the same for accountability purposes as a student who progresses but does not make adequate progress towards English proficiency. For example, if a student is in the 1st quartile of Emerging in their first year, and then regresses to the 4th quartile of Entering in their second year, the school will not get credit for the student making adequate progress towards proficiency, the same as if the student had progressed from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile of Emerging. .

**Q:** If a student makes expected progress in the current year, but falls short of the cumulative progress goal because of failing to make expected progress in a previous year, will the school get credit for the current year's progress?

**A:** Yes, the student can receive credit either by making the expected growth in a particular year, or by meeting the cumulative target for that year.

**Q:** Many schools vary in their proportions of initial-ELP students. For instance, some schools may have many initial-Entering students, while others may have mostly initial-Expanding. What considerations are given to this type of variation?

**A:** As demonstrated in the growth expectation table above, student-level growth targets vary depending on the initial-ELP of the student. However, school level targets will also be determined based on the proportion of initial-ELP students, and the probabilities of students meeting those targets.

**Q: What is a quartile and how are quartiles established?**

**A:** A quartile is one of four groups into which each performance level is divided. Student growth is measured over quartiles because it has been observed that students may show growth within one performance level, and those students should be credited for that growth. Quartiles are established by dividing the performance of students within a performance level into quarters. The score that serves to divide each quarter is the cut score for each quartile.

## NOTIFICATION

**Q: Will the schools/districts receive a chart of the NYSESLAT scale score ranges for each quartile by grade level?**

**A:** Yes, this is information that will be provided to the field.

**Q: When will schools receive their ELP Benchmark and Success Ratio?**

**A:** We anticipate this information will be provided in Fall 2018.

## COHORT/SUBGROUP

**Q: Please explain the difference between a cohort and a subgroup.**

**A:** In terms of measuring the ELP indicator “cohort” refers to the number of English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners enrolled in a school that are used to determine whether a school has met the necessary n-size of students for this indicator to be applied.

Subgroup refers the four selected groups of students for which ESSA requires states to provide specific data sets (ESSA Sec 1111(c)). These groups include “economically disadvantaged students; students from major racial and ethnic groups; children with disabilities; and English Language Learners.” All students measured by the ELP indicator are part of the English Language Learners subgroup, but the system must also take into account those students who also are part of additional subgroups (since racial and ethnic groups are included, all students in the system will be part of at least one subgroup).

**Q: What is the two-year cohort that is being used to determine if the ELP indicator applies to a**

**school's accountability or not?**

**A:** For this indicator to be applied, a subgroup's cohort must have an n-size count of at least 30 ELLs/MLLs over a two-year period. Subgroups with a cohort size below 30 will not receive a measurement for the ELP indicator

**Q:** Does a school with fewer than 30 ELLs receive an ELP Benchmark and Success Ratio?

**A:** No, the Benchmark and Success Ratio are part of the ELP indicator measurement, and as such they are not provided to schools for subgroups with fewer than 30 ELLs/MLLs in its n-size cohort (measured over two years). . For example, if a school has 40 students in the all students group and 20 students in the economically disadvantaged subgroup for which the school is accountable on the ELP indicator, the ELP indicator will be used as part of the process of determined accountability for the "all students" group but not for the economically disadvantaged subgroup.

## TRANSFER STUDENTS

**Q:** When students transfer within New York State, is accountability for the student's NYSESLAT results shared between the sending and receiving schools?

**A:** The cohort for the ELP indicator includes only students who are enrolled in the same school at both the BEDS count day and during the administration of the NYSESLAT. Students who transfer between schools after BEDS day would not be included in either schools' cohort.

**Q:** How will NYSED make available to schools the NYSESLAT results for students who transferred within NYS?

**A:** These results are part of the student records that are provided to the receiving schools upon transfer.

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**Q:** How are students who leave and then transfer back into New York State addressed on the indicator? Does it make a difference if the students have been out of state for more than two years?



**A:** As long as a student is considered an ELL in New York State, that student’s scores will be used for the ELP model. The initial level on a student’s first NYSESLAT after taking the NYSITELL is used in the ELP model to establish a student’s annual progress and “safe harbor” trajectory. If the student transferred out of New York State prior to taking the NYSESLAT in his/her first year, then the student’s first NYSESLAT score will be used as the ELP starting point. If a student leaves the state for more than two years and needs to re-take the NYSITELL in order to receive services, then the student’s initial NYSESLAT score after re-taking the NYSITELL will be used as their ELP starting point.

## LONG-TERM ELLS

**Q:** Does a student who scores Emerging or higher on their first NYSESLAT still have 5 years before being classified as a Long-term ELL?

**A:** The following definition applies to all students regardless of their proficiency level upon entering New York State schools: “Long-term English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners shall mean students who have been identified as ELLs under this Part and have received English as a New Language instruction, as a component of their Bilingual Education or English as a New Language program, for a total of seven (7) or more continuously enrolled school years in the United States (the 50 States and the District of Columbia).” Note that a Long-term ELL is different than the trajectory of exiting ELL status. A student’s initial NYSESLAT performance level determines the trajectory of growth in the ELP model.

**Q:** Does the cumulative progress target apply to Long-term ELLs?

**A:** Once a student has passed the trajectory of growth based on their initial NYSESLAT score, the student is expected to make 0.75 progress points on growth in each subsequent year. A student can meet the cumulative growth target by reaching Commanding.

For additional information on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) visit the [Office of Accountability ESSA web page](#)

For additional questions on English Language Proficiency and English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs), please contact the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at [OBEWL@nysed.gov](mailto:OBEWL@nysed.gov) or your [Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network \(RBERN\)](#).

