



Associate Commissioner
Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Educational Technology

June 2013

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Principals of Public, Charter, and Nonpublic Schools

FROM: Ken Wagner

SUBJECT: New Identification Test for English Language Learners to Begin in
2013–14 School Year

I am writing to advise that effective February 1, 2014, a new State test will take the place of the current test used for the statewide identification of English Language Learners. Please see a discussion item from the April 2013 meeting of the Board of Regents at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2013Meetings/April2013/413p12d1.pdf> for background information.

This test, titled the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), will be based on and be similar to the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), but abbreviated in length. The NYSITELL will replace the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R) as the approved means of initially identifying ELLs in New York State. The LAB-R, developed by the New York City Department of Education, has served New York State's students and educators well in providing a uniform statewide standard for the identification of English Language Learners. The NYSITELL will be provided in response to concerns from educators that the LAB-R was not sufficiently aligned with NYSESLAT and, in particular, that determinations made based on the LAB-R were not always indicative of how students would score on the NYSESLAT.

In aligning the NYSESLAT and the NYSITELL, NYSED is providing an initial identification test that will better enable educators to determine a student's level of English proficiency and subsequently provide the appropriate instruction. The NYSITELL was developed from the same pool of questions as the NYSESLAT and the two tests will consequentially include the same types of questions. This similarity will facilitate the transition to this new identification test.

As with the NYSESLAT, there is a two-phased approach to align the NYSITELL to the Common Core. The NYSITELL that will be administered starting in February 2014 is aligned to the Phase I NYSESLAT that was administered in Spring 2013. For more information on this transition please see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/nyseslat/about-nyseslat-rev.pdf>.

Later this year, the State Education Department will recommend to the Board of Regents that Commissioner's Regulations be amended to require that effective February 1, 2014, all public and charter schools administer the NYSITELL just as they are currently

required to administer the LAB–R.¹ Nonpublic schools, though not required to do so, are encouraged to administer NYSITELL for the same purpose of initially identifying English Language Learners.

Administration

The NYSITELL will include most of the same question types as NYSESLAT and cover the same four modalities of Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. Due to the similarities between the NYSESLAT and the NYSITELL, educators who participated in the scorer training and scoring of the Spring 2013 NYSESLAT will be very familiar with the scoring required for the NYSITELL. A guide providing further details on the administration and scoring of NYSITELL will be disseminated prior to the start of the school year.

Ordering Materials

Instructions for school administrators on the ordering of NYSITELL materials via the Department’s online exam request portal will be provided through email by November 1. Schools that submit a request for NYSITELL by November 30, 2013 can expect to receive delivery of the materials the week of January 27, 2014.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please submit them to emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov. Thank you for your continued support with this important work.

¹ Pursuant to Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, New York State public and charter schools must administer a State-approved identification test to newly enrolled students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak a language other than English and who understand and speak little or no English, to determine whether they meet the definition of “English Language Learner.”