



State of Arizona  
Department of Education

June 29, 2016

Dear AZELLA Test Coordinators and ELL Directors:

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has recently reviewed the entire AZELLA program to confirm that we are best meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs). From this review, we found that a small group of students were incorrectly identified as Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) students when they should have been identified as ELL-Parent Withdrawal students. We also found that the existing Proficiency level cut scores for some AZELLA tests might not be set high enough to ensure that students have sufficient English skills to meaningfully participate in mainstream classrooms where instruction is aligned to more rigorous college and career ready standards. ADE has created a plan to address these issues. Our [letter dated May 2, 2016](#), described this plan and indicated that more information would be provided by July 1. This letter will provide additional detail regarding the new cut scores for AZELLA Stages III-V, the actions required due to the change in cut scores, and reminders for all of the tasks required at the start of the school year related to this plan.

**Increasing the AZELLA Stages III-V Proficient Cut Scores**

ADE has raised the Proficient cut scores for the AZELLA Stages III, IV, and V tests to a level that makes it more likely Fluent English Proficient – Year 2 (FEP2) students will perform like their English-only peers on AzMERIT ELA. The old and new Total Combined Proficient cut scores for Stages III-V are shown below.

Total Combined Proficient Cut Score	Stage III			Stage IV			Stage V
	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9-12
Old	2457	2472	2473	2477	2477	2477	2508
New	2474	2499	2523	2530	2535	2540	2550

Corresponding changes have been made in the Proficient cut scores for Reading and Writing. The Proficiency cut scores for Listening and Speaking have not been changed. All of the Domain scores for AZELLA are configured so that the Proficient cut score is always 250 regardless of Domain, Stage, or Grade. This means that while the expectations for proficiency on Writing and Reading have increased and the expectations for proficiency on Listening and Speaking have remained the same, the score associated with proficiency for all of these Domain scores will remain 250.

The requirement that students meet or exceed the Proficient cut score for Total Combined **and** Reading **and** Writing in order to achieve an Overall Proficiency Level status of “Proficient” remains in place. With the increased Proficient cut scores for Total Combined, Reading, and Writing for Stages III-V, the expected pass rate for these tests is expected to drop about 15-20 percentage points.

The change in the Proficient cut scores is effective retroactively to school year 2012-13 and applies to both Placement and Reassessment tests. The cut score changes will be in place when Placement testing opens on July 21, 2016 and will be reflected in the AZELLA score reports beginning with the first reporting cycle of school year 2016-17. Score reports for prior school years will not be changed to reflect the new Proficient cut score.

**Identifying IFEP and RFEP students who perform below their English-only peers and offering services**

Because the new Proficient cut scores are being applied retroactively to school year 2012-13, the English proficiency of some students must be reevaluated. This reevaluation will be done by comparing classroom performance to the performance of English-only students. Appropriate English language services must be offered to students who are not performing like their English-only peers. Details regarding this process follow.



*Determine whether IFEP and RFEP students are performing like English-only peers*

ADE has reviewed the Total Combined, Reading, and Writing scores for all students with an IFEP or RFEP status based on an AZELLA Stage III, IV, or V test administered in school year 2012-13 and later. Of these students, ADE has identified the students with AZELLA scores below the new Proficient cut scores. The English proficiency of these students must be reevaluated. ADE has done the first reevaluation of their English proficiency by reviewing their performance on AzMERIT. ADE has compared the AzMERIT ELA scores for these students to AzMERIT ELA scores for English-only students on the same test. All of these students with an AzMERIT ELA score that is at or above the average score for English-only students are considered to be performing like their English-only peers. These students retain their IFEP or RFEP status and no further action related to this letter is required.

Schools must make a determination about the performance of IFEP and RFEP students with AZELLA scores below the new Proficient cut scores and without an AzMERIT ELA score at or above the average score for English-only students. A list of these students will be provided to schools in the ADEConnect “Stages III-V Performance Survey” application. This application will open on July 11, 2016 and will be populated with students as schools upload enrollment to AzEDS. This survey should be completed before school, if at all possible, but no later than 21 days after the start of the school year for continuing students. For students new to the school, the survey must be completed by the 9<sup>th</sup> week of school or by the student’s 4<sup>th</sup> week of school whichever comes later.

The “Stages III-V Performance Survey” application will be used to identify whether students performed comparably to or below their English-only peers in one or more subjects in school year 2015-16. This determination is to be made based on (1) teacher input, (2) student performance on locally required reading or writing or English language arts assessments, (3) student report card grades in core content areas, and (4) any other language-related academic performance information from school year 2015-16 available to the school. For FEP students, the two-year monitoring form is a good source of information for determining whether or not the student is performing comparably to his/her English-only peers. Students identified as performing comparably to their English-only peers retain their IFEP or RFEP status and no further action related to this letter is required.

*Offer appropriate English language support services*

Students identified in the survey as performing below their English-only peers must be offered English language support services. The English language support services offered at each school for this purpose must include (1) ELL services as part of Arizona’s SEI program and at least one of these options: (2) special course work during the school day, such as reading and/or writing class, or (3) special services offered during the day or outside of the school day, such as tutoring on writing skills. For every student identified as performing below his/her English-only peers, the school must consult with the student’s parent(s) and offer the appropriate English language support service, from the list above, that best meets the student’s language need(s). Parent contact may be in person, by phone, by letter, or by email. Offered services must be provided within a week of receiving parental consent. Parents may opt out of any services offered to their student by the school.

If a student would be best served by receiving ELL services as part of the SEI program and parents agree to accept ELL services, that student must have a recent, qualifying AZELLA score. Students with Spring 2016 AZELLA Reassessment scores below the new Proficient cut scores will not need to take an AZELLA Placement Test to be placed into ELL services. Students without a Spring 2016 AZELLA Reassessment result must take an AZELLA Placement Test and must score below “Proficient” for the Overall Proficiency Level to be eligible for ELL services. Complete an “AZELLA Placement Test – Teacher Referral Form – Moving from Mainstream to ELL Services” form before administering an AZELLA Placement Test to these students. IFEP or RFEP students who are placed into ELL services will be reclassified as ELL students. If a school recommends ELL services as the appropriate English language support service for an IFEP or RFEP student with a qualifying AZELLA score, and the parent declines ELL services, the student will be reclassified as ELL-Parent Withdrawal. All other students, who are not placed back into ELL services, but identified as performing below their English-only peers retain their IFEP and RFEP status.

Schools must continue to offer English language support services until students score above the average English-only score on AzMERIT for their grade level, demonstrate performance that is comparable to their English-only peers, or in the case of students placed into ELL services until they achieve an Overall Proficiency Level score of “Proficient” on AZELLA, or until the student is no longer enrolled whichever is sooner.



### Actions Required

- **By the 21<sup>st</sup> day of school for continuing students and by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> week of school or the student's 4<sup>th</sup> week of school for new students**, complete the "Stages III-V Performance Survey" on ADEConnect. For each student listed, indicate whether the student's performance for school year 2015-16 was comparable to or below his/her English-only peers. The determination of student performance should be based on (1) teacher input, (2) student performance on locally required reading or writing or English language arts assessments, (3) student report card grades in core content areas, and (4) any other language-related academic performance information from school year 2015-16 available to the school. For FEP students, the two-year monitoring form is a good source of information for determining whether or not the student is performing comparably to his/her English-only peers.
- For each student identified in the survey as performing below their English-only peers, confer with parent(s) in person, by phone, by letter, or by email and offer English language support services that best meet the student's need(s). The English language support services available at each school for this purpose must include (1) ELL services as part of Arizona's SEI program and at least one of these options: (2) special course work during the school day, such as reading and/or writing class, or (3) special services offered during the day or outside of the school day, such as tutoring on writing skills. Within the survey application, indicate the date of parent contact and the English language services to be provided.
- **Within one week of receiving parent consent**, provide the offered English language support services. Continue to provide English language support services until the student performance is comparable to his/her English-only peers or the student is no longer enrolled.

### Newly reclassified ELL-Parent Withdrawal Students

As explained in our [letter dated March 16, 2016](#) and our [letter dated May 2, 2016](#) Kindergarten IFEP students who did not pass the Reassessment test and whose parents subsequently declined ELL services during school years 2012-13 and 2013-14, incorrectly maintained their IFEP classification. ADE has changed the classification of these students to ELL-Parent Withdrawal students. As ELL-Parent Withdrawal students, their English proficiency must be assessed every school year until they demonstrate proficiency. For school year 2015-16, the required testing of these students was accomplished through the administration of an AZELLA Placement Test to the Grade 2 students and an AzMERIT ELA test to the Grade 3 students.

Action at the start of school year 2016-17 is required for some of these newly reclassified ELL-Parent Withdrawal students. Grade 2 students who did not pass the AZELLA Placement Test administered at the end of school year 2015-16 must be offered ELL services at the start of school year 2016-17 as entering Grade 3 students. Grade 2 students, who should have taken an AZELLA Placement Test at the end of school year 2015-16 but did not, must take an AZELLA Placement Test at the start of school year 2016-17 as entering Grade 3 students. Grade 3 students who did not pass the AzMERIT ELA test must take an AZELLA Placement Test at the start of school year 2016-17 as entering Grade 4 students.

### Actions Required

- **Within the first two weeks of the start of school year 2016-17**, offer ELL services to those entering Grade 3 ELL-Parent Withdrawal students who did not pass the AZELLA Placement Test at the end of school year 2015-16. These entering Grade 3 students will have an ELL eligibility identified on their SDELL70 Report and on the SDELL73 Report.
- **Within the first two weeks of the start of school year 2016-17**, administer an AZELLA Placement Test to entering Grade 3 students who should have, but did not take an AZELLA Placement Test at the end of school year 2015-16. These entering Grade 3 students will be identified on their SDELL70 Report and on the SDELL73 Report as needing a Placement Test.



- **Within the first two weeks of the start of school year 2016-17**, administer an AZELLA Placement Test to the newly reclassified ELL-Parent Withdrawal students who did not pass their AzMERIT Grade 3 ELA test. These entering Grade 4 students will be identified on their SDELL70 Report and on the SDELL73 Report as being in need of an AZELLA Placement Test.

Students who pass the AZELLA Placement Test will be classified as RFEP students and will no longer require annual English proficiency assessment. Students who do not pass the AZELLA Placement Test are eligible for and must be offered ELL services for school year 2016-17. If ELL services are accepted, the students will be considered ELL students; otherwise, if parents decline services as documented on the Parent Request for Student Withdrawal Form, these students will be classified as ELL-Parent Withdrawal students. Both ELL and ELL-Parent Withdrawal students must participate in annual Reassessment testing, beginning with Spring 2017, until they demonstrate proficiency.

**Reevaluating the English proficiency of some students due to higher Kindergarten Placement Test cut score**

As explained in our [letter dated May 2, 2016](#), ADE raised the proficient cut score on the AZELLA Kindergarten Placement Test. This requires the English proficiency of some Kindergarten IFEP students from school years 2014-15 and 2015-16 to be reevaluated. ADE developed a “Grade Level Performance Survey” application on ADEConnect to identify which students affected by the Kindergarten Placement Test cut score change performed at or above grade level during school year 2015-16 and which students performed below grade level during school year 2015-16. Students identified as performing at or above grade level retain their IFEP status. Students identified as performing below grade level, or who were not identified as either at/above grade level or below grade level for school year 2015-16 must take an AZELLA Placement Test at the beginning of school year 2016-17.

**Action Required**

- **Within the first two weeks of the start of school year 2016-17**, administer an AZELLA Placement Test to the students identified on the “Grade Level Performance Survey” as performing below grade level for school year 2015-16. These entering Grade 1 and Grade 2 students will be identified on the SDELL73 Report as being in need of an AZELLA Placement Test. The SDELL73 Report is updated nightly based on student enrollment.

Students who pass the AZELLA Placement Test will retain their IFEP status. Students who do not pass the AZELLA Placement Test are eligible for and must be offered ELL services for school year 2016-17. If ELL services are accepted, the students will be considered ELL students; otherwise, if parents decline services as documented on the Parent Request for Student Withdrawal Form, these students will be considered ELL-Parent Withdrawal students. Both ELL and ELL-Parent Withdrawal students must participate in annual Reassessment testing, beginning with Spring 2017, until they demonstrate proficiency.

Nothing in this letter changes the requirement to monitor FEP1 and FEP2 students as would otherwise be expected. As always, the Assessment Section and OELAS Section are available to answer questions you may have about this letter and the required actions described.

How the testing and performance of any of the students described in the letter will be included in any ELL Accountability has yet to be determined.

All communication with parents related to actions described in the letter must be in a language the parents understand and must state that the purpose of the notification is to ensure their student’s educational needs are being met.



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