



ELL Student Plans and Grading Guide

The state, in TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ESL PROGRAM POLICY 3.207, has given guidelines on how schools should make the curriculum accessible to ESL students. The guidelines are on page 2 in the second paragraph of Step 2:

In content area classes, teachers must modify instruction and assessment to make content area curriculum accessible to ESL students. Students may not be retained due to language ability. (1964 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; Lau v. Nichols, 1974).

In order to comply with these guidelines, CMCSS has approved an ESL Education Plan that is tailored for each student receiving direct instruction in ESL. The ESL teacher and each general education (GE) teacher who works with the ESL student agree to the plan, which specifies the accommodations and modifications that the teachers are obligated to provide. This document is generated in ELLevation, the ESL data handling service.

Modified Grades

The education plan includes a special grading option for students who are considered “newcomers.” Newcomer students are those who are within their first year of attending a U.S. school. Newcomers who are unable to participate fully in regular classwork will be graded ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘Unsatisfactory.’ Since PowerSchool cannot record this grading at all grade levels, Satisfactory will be entered as 80% and Unsatisfactory will be entered as 69%. This accommodation is only available to newcomers, and a note must be placed in the report card confirming the meaning of the grades for the parents. They should have received the notification of the modified grading in their copy of the ELL Student Plan as well.

As the student adjusts to U.S. schools, it is possible to make notes in the plan, such as: "Student is on the same grading as others with these exceptions: _____." This allows teachers to reduce the grading modification as the student starts to participate in regular classwork. This often happens first in math, and then later in the other content areas. Eventually, usually before a full year has passed, the student is placed on a regular grading scale with scaffolded and modified work in place.

Modified Work and Accommodations

Teachers must be able to show that they are following the ELL Student Plan through documentation in their lesson plans and copies of the modified assignments and assessments. This protects both the teacher and the district from liability in the case of an audit or investigation by the Office of Civil Rights.

If all accommodations and modifications are being provided, but a student is not completing the work, then that student should receive a failing grade on that work. If the student is failing a class under the ELL Student Plan, the plan should be reassessed to make sure that it is appropriate. We recommend that the parent(s) be invited in for a conference, although this is not required. If the ESL teacher, GE teacher, and other relevant stakeholders feel that the plan is appropriate, then the student should enter into the support team process in order to determine whether there are other factors, in addition to low proficiency in English, that might be impeding the student’s ability to achieve.



Retention may only be considered in cases of excessive absences or incorrect initial grade placement according to the student's age. When considering the retention/failure of an ESL student, the classroom teacher must provide the following documents to the ESL teacher and the ESL coordinator:

- Copies of at least 3 different modified tests completed by student
- Copies of at least 3 different modified homework assignments completed by student
- Other examples of modifications/accommodations (at least 3)
- Copies of the report card showing failing grades (failing grades must be made while receiving all accommodations and modification under the Education plan)
- Proof of Parent Notification (in the home language, if possible)
- Retention Packet (Elementary)

All documents and evidence should be collected and turned in with the ESL student Retention Checklist as a cover page. The packet will be reviewed to ensure compliance with State Board of Education policies. A decision on retention cannot be made until all documents have been reviewed by the ESL Coordinator.

To assist teachers and principals in making appropriate modifications, it is the responsibility of the ESL teacher to provide them with the following:

- ESL Student Plan
- WIDA proficiency descriptors

If you have any questions, please contact your ESL teacher or the district ESL Coordinator.

Send copies of all documents to:

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