

Achieving reading competency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone for every student and is a predictor of ongoing educational success. Early literacy development is not only critical to a child's success, but it is also one of Colorado's top education priorities. The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (the READ Act), passed by the Colorado Legislature in 2012, places a focus on early literacy development for all students and especially for students at risk of not achieving 3rd grade reading proficiency. The READ Act focuses on kindergarten through third grade literacy development, literacy assessment, and individual READ plans for students reading significantly below grade level.

Recognizing the unique language and literacy needs of English Learners to become proficient readers in English, the Colorado Department of Education has created this guidance for implementation of the READ Act with English Learners. This guidance is designed to provide parameters for districts to use when developing local policies and practices to support the literacy development of English Learners. Colorado school districts have the authority to approach implementation of the READ Act with English Learners in ways that are appropriate for their local context and individual needs of students and are responsible for doing so in alignment with the requirements and intent of the READ Act and in compliance with other relevant state and federal guidelines.

Context for Implementing the READ Act with English Learners

The intent of the READ Act is to prevent reading gaps from developing by providing best, first literacy instruction and to act quickly when children fall behind. Because of this, the rules for the READ Act define the attributes of effective universal classroom instruction. At the school level, effective instruction requires a multi-tiered system of supports that provides students with differentiated instruction based on students' needs. Also, school leaders should assure that students receive 90 minutes of daily reading instruction and that there is a scope and sequence so that reading instruction follows a developmentally appropriate progression. At the classroom level, instruction should (1) be based on the Colorado Academic Standards and Colorado English Language Proficiency Standards, (2) be guided by assessment, (3) follow a reading development continuum, and (4) address oral language and the five components of reading (which include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension).

Supporting the language and literacy development of English Learners requires instruction and programming that reflect their unique learning needs. Goldenberg (2013) identified three research-based principles of effective instructional practice for English Learners:

- generally effective instructional practices are likely to be effective with English Learners;
- English Learners require additional instructional supports, and
- an English Learner's home language can be used to promote academic development.

To effectively meet the academic needs of English Learners, an instructional program must be designed to provide for English language acquisition as well as academic supports. The program must ensure high expectations for all students, provide access to grade level standards, increase interactions among English Learners, teachers, and peers, be instructionally sound, and have appropriate resources and materials. While there are a variety of options for the delivery of language supports for English Learners, districts should consider which program(s) are the best fit given the district's resources and which program(s) best meet the needs of the district's student population.



Determining a Significant Reading Deficiency for English Learners

The READ Act specifies that educators make data-informed decisions in order to target early support so that all children are reading at grade level by third grade. Specifically, the READ Act requires that all children in kindergarten through third grade be assessed using an interim assessment to determine whether a student has a significant reading deficiency. If a significant reading deficiency is indicated, the READ Act requires use of a diagnostic assessment to determine the area(s) of the reading deficiency to inform READ plans and interventions. For English Learners, the process for determining a significant reading deficiency should involve multiple data points to ensure accurate identification of students in need of additional literacy support. Accurate literacy assessment of English Learners requires a combination of assessments designed to document language acquisition and literacy development in order to determine whether students are making progress toward achieving English reading proficiency.

The READ Act rules require that all students be assessed within the first 30 school days of enrollment using an approved interim reading assessment. Any student who scores at or below the cut score (DIBELS or DRA2) or below the cut score (PALS) on the initial assessment must be tested again within the next 30 school days of instruction using a progress monitoring probe from the same initial assessment. If the student scores at or below the cut point for a second time, the student is considered to have a significant reading deficiency (SRD), and a READ plan must be developed. For English Learners, the assessment and SRD determination process can be adjusted according to the language acquisition level of the child and in light of additional data from English language proficiency assessments and native language reading assessments.

Non-English Proficient Students in Their First Year in a U. S. School

English Learners who are classified as non-English proficient (NEP) and in their first year in a U. S. school are eligible for SRD determination, these students can be exempt from an SRD identification based on local determination of need. These students are not required to participate in the READ assessment process; however, the department recommends that English and where appropriate, native language, reading assessments be administered to establish baseline data in order to monitor annual growth.

English Learners Beyond Their First Year in a U. S. School

All children in kindergarten through third grade are subject to the READ Act. The recommended process for determining a significant reading deficiency and appropriate interventions differs according to the language of literacy instruction.

English Learners Receiving Literacy Instruction in English

Districts may exercise flexibility in the use of assessment data to either confirm or refute the existence of a significant reading deficiency for English Learners receiving literacy instruction in English. English Learners who receive literacy instruction in English should be administered a [state approved](#) English interim reading assessment within the first 30 days of instruction. Should an English Learner test at or below the cut scores for an SRD designation, additional evidence may be used to invalidate the SRD determination. Acceptable evidence includes ACCESS for ELLs®, native language interim reading assessment data, or other locally-determined valid and reliable ELD data. Should the evidence from additional ELD assessments suggest that an English Learner's literacy growth trajectory is not on-track compared to his/her English learner peers, the teacher may choose to continue through the SRD determination process by administering the appropriate reading probes 30 days later. Evidence from these reading assessments should then be used to determine whether an SRD designation is appropriate for the child. If an SRD determination is confirmed, [diagnostic assessments](#) should be used to identify the child's specific areas of need and a READ plan should be developed to determine (1) literacy goals



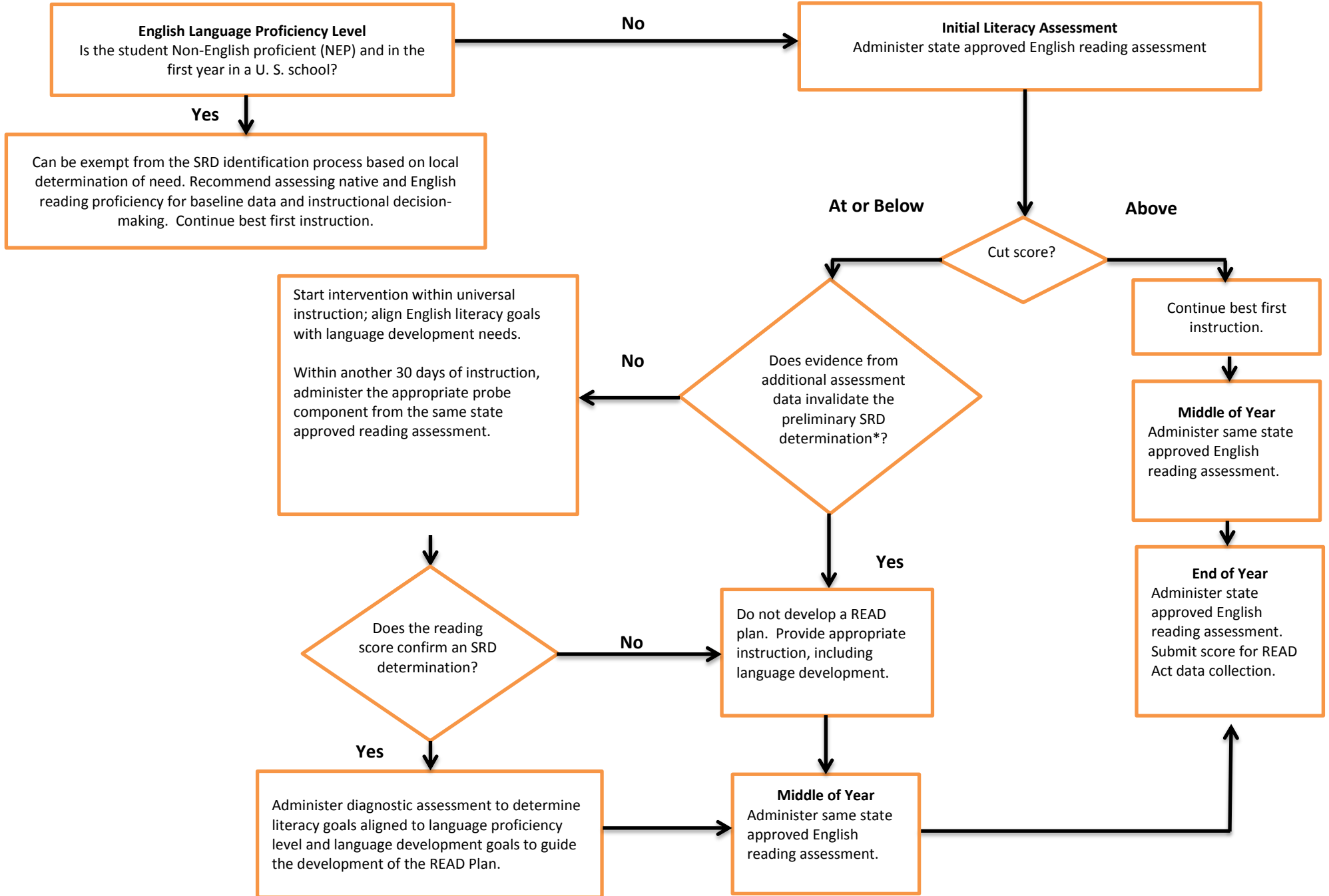
aligned to the child's language proficiency level, and (2) appropriate language development goals that are aligned to literacy goals. If an SRD determination is not validated, the assessment information should be used to identify the appropriate instruction and English language development for the student.

In the spring, each child should be administered an English and optional Spanish reading assessment. If an English Learner scores at or below the cut point for an SRD determination on the spring end-of-year reading assessment, teachers may use additional evidence to invalidate the SRD end-of-year determination. Acceptable evidence includes the most current ACCESS for ELLs[®], native language interim reading assessment data, or other locally-determined valid and reliable ELD data. Regardless of whether an SRD determination is appropriate for an English Learner, the information gleaned from language and literacy assessments should be used to inform appropriate instruction for English Learners to ensure their continued language and literacy development.

Figure 1 illustrates a decision tree for determining a significant reading deficiency for English Learners who receive their literacy instruction in English.



Figure 1. SRD Determination Process for English Learners Receiving Literacy Instruction in English



*see page 2.



English Learners Receiving Literacy Instruction in Spanish

Districts that provide literacy instruction in Spanish for English Learners may use state approved Spanish reading assessments to determine whether students have a reading problem. For reporting and English development progress monitoring, districts are required to administer an English reading interim assessment at least once a year in the spring.

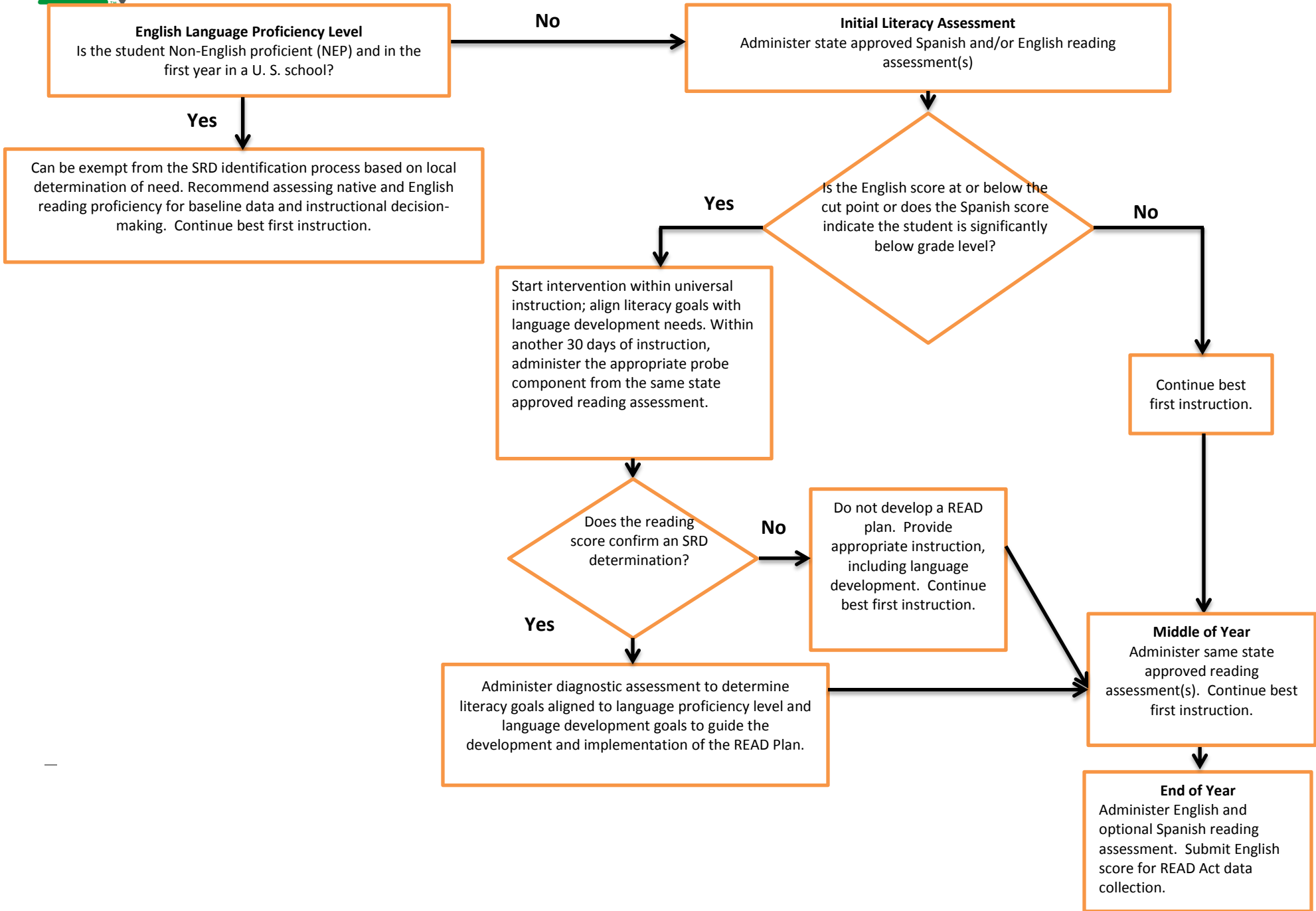
English Learners who receive literacy instruction in Spanish should be administered a [state approved](#) Spanish and/or English interim reading assessment within the first 30 days of instruction. Should the score on an English interim reading assessment indicate that the student has a significant reading deficiency or the Spanish interim reading assessment score indicate the student is significantly below grade level, the teacher should start intervention within universal instruction, aligning the child's literacy goals with English language development needs. Within another 30 days of instruction, the teacher should administer the appropriate probe component from the same state approved reading assessment. If a reading problem is confirmed, state approved [diagnostic assessments](#) must be used to identify the child's specific areas of need and a READ plan should be developed to determine (1) literacy goals aligned to the child's English language proficiency level, and (2) appropriate language development goals that are aligned to literacy goals. If a reading problem is not validated, the assessment information should be used to identify the appropriate instruction and English language development for the student.

In the spring, each child should be administered an English and optional Spanish reading assessment. If an English Learner scores at or below the cut point for an SRD determination on the spring end-of-year reading assessment, teachers may use additional evidence to invalidate the SRD end-of-year determination. Acceptable evidence includes EDL2, IDEL, PALS Español, or the current year ACCESS for ELLs[®] data. Regardless of whether an SRD determination is appropriate for an English Learner, the information gleaned from language and literacy assessments should be used to inform appropriate instruction for English Learners to ensure their continued language and literacy development.

Figure 2 illustrates a decision tree for determining a significant reading deficiency for English Learners who receive their literacy instruction in Spanish.



Figure 2. SRD Determination Process for English Learners Receiving Literacy Instruction in Spanish





A Note on the Appropriate Use of ACCESS for ELLs[®]

ACCESS for ELLs[®] is administered annually and measures students' English language proficiency. ACCESS is used for accountability purposes related to English language proficiency. Because ACCESS weights English language proficiency in literacy (combined English language proficiency in reading and writing) as 70% of the overall composite proficiency level score, it can be used to assist teachers in setting appropriate English language development goals for English Learners. It is important to note that ACCESS is not a measure of a child's achievement or mastery of standards in reading and writing within the Colorado Academic Standards.

ACCESS data can inform READ plans for English Learners and could be useful in the end of year designation and reporting of a significant reading deficiency. Given the testing window for ACCESS, it would be less reliable in the fall in providing current information about a student's English language proficiency. Data from the W-APT™ can be used to provide information on whether a student is an English Learner for kindergarten and students new to a district.

Developing READ Plans for English Learners

If an English Learner is determined to have a significant reading deficiency, a READ plan must be developed. Given the unique language and literacy needs of English Learners, the department has created an example plan specific to English Learners. The sample READ plan for English Learners contains the required components of a READ plan which includes components for an individual English Language Development Plan. The sample READ plan for English Learners is an example, not a required template. Districts can determine the format and the name of their plans. The intent of the sample is to illustrate the areas of English language and literacy development a teacher should consider when planning instruction and intervention for English Learners.

The following principles should be observed in the creation of READ plans for English Learners:

- The READ plan for English Learners should include English literacy reading goals aligned to English language development level as described in the WIDA Can Do Descriptors. For students receiving literacy assessment, instruction, and intervention in Spanish, the READ plan should include appropriate literacy goals in Spanish.
- Interventions included within a READ plan for English Learners must be appropriate based on a student's English language development.
- ACCESS data should also be reviewed and included to guide prioritizing goals for the plan.
- As appropriate, state approved Spanish assessments should be used if needed to guide instructional goal planning.

Further support for effective English Learner literacy instruction and intervention will be produced by CDE including identification of instructional resources and professional development.

Future Work Related to Reading Assessment of English Learners

Beyond the flexibility for reading assessment of English Learners allowed within this guidance document, questions from some Colorado school districts have continued regarding identification of significant reading deficiencies of English Learners who receive their literacy instruction in Spanish. Specifically, districts asked whether a significant reading deficiency may be determined using a Spanish assessment or if it must be determined using only an assessment in English.

At the June State Board of Education meeting, Commissioner Hammond indicated that he would be asking the Attorney General's Office to provide a formal opinion regarding this question. In August, the Attorney General's Office provided the Commissioner and State Board of Education with the formal opinion that it is permissible under the READ Act to



determine whether a child has a 'Significant Reading Deficiency' by testing that child using the State Board of Education-approved interim assessments normed for students who speak Spanish as their native language.

In response to this opinion, department staff is currently reviewing the [READ Act rules](#) and other department policies that may be affected by the Attorney General's opinion. In addition to continuing to work with the English Learner Literacy Task Force, CDE will be identifying and engaging districts who may be affected by this opinion in order to determine next steps. The department anticipates that adjustments to department policies in relation to the Attorney General's opinion will be in place for the 2015-16 school year. For the 2014-15 school year, districts are encouraged to follow this guidance document which provides districts with implementation considerations in alignment with department policies and supportive of the direction of the Attorney General's opinion.

CDE will release information on the steps the department will take to align the READ Act rules and determine appropriate Spanish reading interim assessments in the fall of 2014.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE [Guidebook on Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Services for English Learners \(ELs\)](#)
- SAMPLE EL READ PLAN <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/ellandread>
- READ ACT [HOME PAGE](#)
- READ ACT [RULES](#)
- WIDA [ELD STANDARDS AND ELD LITERACY](#)