

READ Act and English Learners

Guidance for 2018-19



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 and serves as an update to the document that was created in September of 2015. Specifically, this guidance incorporates based on changes to the READ Act from HB 17-1160. As of October 2017, the State Board of Education amended rules which authorizes districts to determine the language in which a student who is an English Learner takes reading assessments in kindergarten through third grade. All other sections of the READ Act remain the same. With this in mind, 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 development including 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 research-based 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 a State Board [approved interim reading assessment](#) to determine whether a student has a significant reading deficiency (SRD). If an SRD 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 an SRD should involve multiple data points from a variety of assessments 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 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 days of enrollment using a State Board approved interim reading assessment. HB 15-1323 allows districts to extend assessment for kindergarten students up to 90 days. If districts complete the assessment within 60 days, they may use the READ Act assessment to complete the literacy component of the school readiness assessment. Additional information on the implementation of HB 15-1323 is found on the [READ Act webpage](#).

Once the student is determined to have an SRD, a READ plan must be developed. For English Learners, the assessment and SRD determination process may be adjusted according to the language proficiency level of the child and additional data from English language proficiency assessments and native language reading assessments.

This document provides guidance to support districts with identification of SRD for English Learners in three instances:

- Non-English proficient students in their first year in a US school.
- English Learners who are beyond their first year of school and who are not native Spanish speakers.
- English Learners who are beyond their first year of school and who are native Spanish speakers.

The following sections include both a narrative and flow chart to support understanding.

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 if this determination is based on a student's reading ability and not their English language proficiency. However, these students can be exempt from an SRD identification based on local determination of need.

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

All students 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 assessment.

SRD determination for English learners assessed in English

All K – 3 students who are English learners should be administered a State Board [approved interim reading assessment](#) within the first 30 days of instruction. Per HB 15-1323, districts may choose to extend assessment for kindergarten students (see reference above). Districts, however, may exercise flexibility in the use of assessment data to either confirm or refute the existence of a significant reading deficiency (SRD) for English Learners who are assessed in English. 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

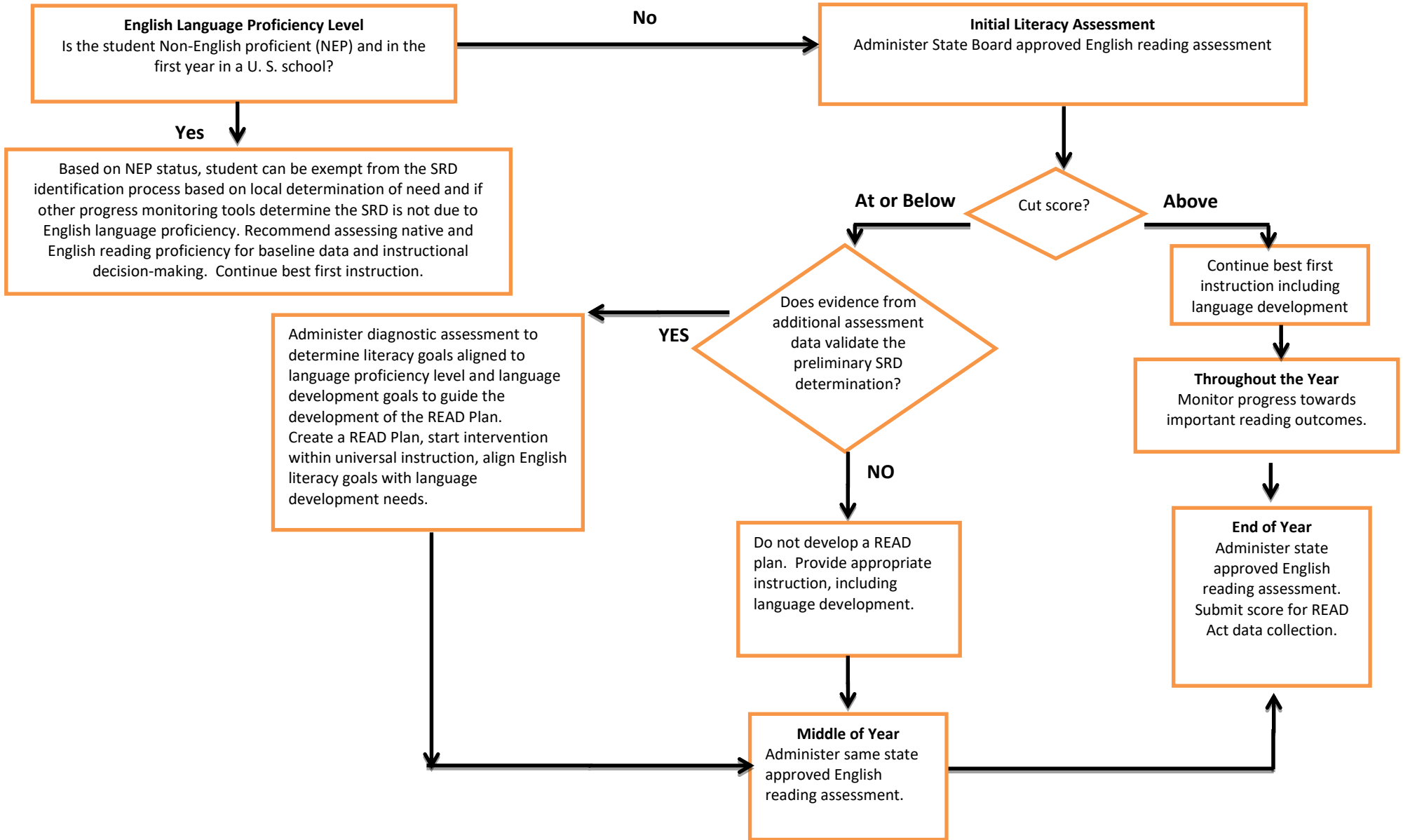


appropriate reading probes to confirm SRD designation. Evidence from these reading assessments should then be used to determine whether an SRD designation is appropriate for the child. If an SRD determination is confirmed, a State Board approved diagnostic assessment should be used to identify the child's 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.

If an English Learner scores at or below the cut point for an SRD determination on the end-of-year reading assessment, teachers may use additional evidence to refute 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. Information gleaned from language and literacy assessments should be used to inform appropriate instruction for English Learners whether or not an SRD determination is made. This will ensure continued support for both language and literacy development. English Learners assessed with an English interim assessment whose status is refuted based on additional evidence related to language skills are exempt from retention considerations as an intervention strategy in compliance with the READ Act.

Figure 1 illustrates a decision tree for determining a significant reading deficiency for English Learners who are assessed in English.

Figure 1. SRD Determination Process for English Learners Who Are Assessed in English





SRD determination for English Learners who are native Spanish speakers assessed in Spanish

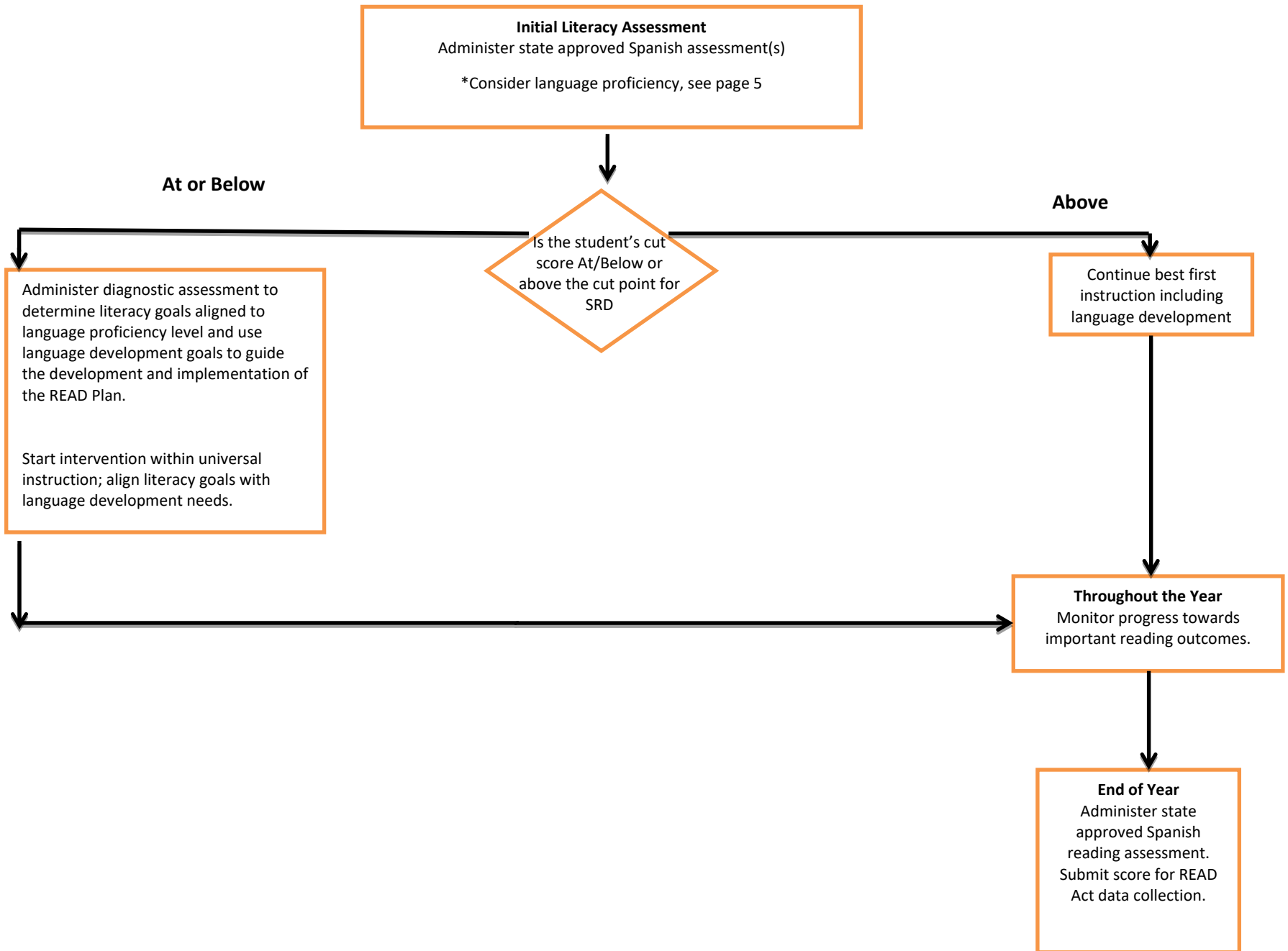
Districts who have K-3 students who are English Learners and whose native language is Spanish shall determine, using English language proficiency ranges, whether the student takes the State Board approved interim reading assessment in English or Spanish. The State Board Rules for the Administration of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (1 CCR 301-92 section 3.05 (A) and (B)) require that the Local Education Provider determine and communicate to parents the level of English proficiency at which the student must take the approved reading assessment in English. If the student scores within the range that the Local Education Provider determines demonstrates partial proficiency in English or higher, then the Local Education Provider shall ensure that the student annually takes at least one board approved reading assessment in English.

In determining whether a student continues taking the reading assessments in Spanish, each district shall review the student's score on the most recent ACCESS for ELLs[®]. If the student is not yet partially proficient, the district may choose to assess in Spanish. If a student takes a reading assessment in Spanish, the school district may also administer a State Board approved interim reading assessment in English to the student, at the request of the student's parent. However, if the district chooses not to adopt a Spanish language assessment and to assess students only in English, then the aforementioned guidance regarding SRD determination for English learners who are assessed in English applies.

If an English Learner is administered a Spanish interim reading assessment and scores at or below the cut point for an SRD determination on the end-of-year assessment administration, teachers may not use additional evidence to refute the SRD determination as the Spanish interim assessment is confirmation of an SRD. Information gleaned from language and literacy assessments should be used to inform appropriate instruction for English Learners whether or not an SRD determination is made. This will ensure continued support for both language and literacy development. English Learners assessed with a Spanish interim assessment are subject to retention considerations.

Figure 2 illustrates a decision tree for determining a significant reading deficiency for English Learners who are native Spanish speakers who are assessed in Spanish

Figure 2. SRD Determination Process for English Learners who are Native Spanish Speakers assessed in Spanish





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 as determined by a State Board approved interim assessment, 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 reading goals aligned to English language development level as described in the WIDA Can Do Descriptors. The READ plan should include appropriate literacy goals for the language(s) of instruction.
- Interventions included within a READ plan for English Learners must be appropriate based on a student's English language proficiency level.
- 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.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE Guidebook on Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Services for English Learners (ELs): <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/resources>
- Sample English Learner READ Plan: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readandel>
- READ Act Home Page: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>
- READ Act Rules: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readrules3916>
- WIDA ELD Standards and ELD Literacy: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/celpstandards