MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D.

DATE: February 28, 2012

SUBJECT: English Language Development Standards (Spring 2012 Assessment Administration)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this communication is to provide an update on Maryland's transition to new English Language Development (ELD) standards and English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Title III of Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to have ELD standards and an annual ELP assessment of all English Language Learners (ELLs). Maryland's previous ELP standards were aligned to Maryland's English Language Arts standards only. Regulatory guidance from USDE has emphasized alignment to English and mathematics standards. Current educational initiatives and accountability measures, including the new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum and PARCC assessments, will provide additional academic challenges for ELLs. By joining the 27-state consortium, *World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment* (WIDA), Maryland has taken steps to address the need to augment the ELD standards and increase the rigor of the ELP assessment.

The new ELD standards are directly aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics. The standards focus on academic language, the kind of language students need to understand in order to be successful in the general education setting, incorporating not only the language of language arts and mathematics but also that of science and social studies.

The ELP assessment, *ACCESS for ELLS*, measures English proficiency through academic language; it is refreshed every year, providing the opportunity to address current research and improve the assessment from year to year.

MSDE and WIDA have collaborated to provide a series of statewide professional development offerings. These included (1) a June 2011 session for ELL program managers and their teams followed in September by three regional sessions for teachers and administrators which focused on the background and structure of the ELD standards and their application to instructional practice for all teachers, (2) an October 2011 session for all LEA local accountability coordinators and ELL program managers on the logistics involved in the ordering and shipping process, and (3) four regional sessions in December 2011 which focused on the administration of the ELP assessment. In May, we will provide two webinars on the interpretation and use of the ELP assessment score reports. Our professional development related to the standards and assessment is ongoing; plans are underway to identify and address the needs of LEAs during the coming school year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

English language acquisition has always been an instructional priority for ELLs. Maryland's new standards and assessment emphasize the development of grade-appropriate academic and content language at all English proficiency levels from beginning through advanced. The desired result is that upon exit from ELL programs, students have reached a level of English proficiency that provides them with the background and skills they need in order to be successful in the classroom.

ACTION:

For information only, no action required.

BJS:scs