

# 12 GRADING POLICY GUIDELINES

## FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

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It is important for every district to have a policy in place for grading English Learners (ELs) in content areas. Without one, grading can be inconsistent, which may result in parents receiving an inaccurate impression of their child's progress.

Being an EL is usually only a temporary label. Given the proper supports, ELs will attain English proficiency and will effectively "learn English." But developing academic English can take, on average, anywhere from five to seven years. And during this learning period, failing grades can be demoralizing. Beginner and intermediate ELs must have a fair grading system in place.

*For assistance in developing compliant EL programs and modules or learning best practices and strategies for teaching ELs, email [Jill.Kramer@escco.org](mailto:Jill.Kramer@escco.org).*

So, how do you build this system to support ELs throughout their journey of acquiring the language?

- 1. Start your policy with a belief statement or philosophy.**  
*We believe that all ELs can learn and achieve high standards. ELs should not receive a failing grade due to their limited language proficiency.*
- 2. For beginning ELs, use Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.**
- 3. Give traditional grades if students can earn them on their own or with accommodations.**
- 4. It is fine to give traditional grades in some subjects and Pass/Fail in other subjects.**
- 5. Use comments to explain progress to parents. Use clear language and give details.**
- 6. Be positive in comments; emphasize progress and effort.**
- 7. Provide accommodations and modifications in instruction *and* assessment.**
- 8. Give students many ways to show what they know.**
- 9. Consider giving three grades: (1) product, (2) process, (3) progress**
- 10. For newcomers who are older, or lack formal education, progress should be based on modified standards. For example, an eighth grader who needs to learn the alphabet, learn basic math facts etc.**
- 11. Never fail an EL due to their language proficiency.**
- 12. Don't retain an EL based on their language proficiency.**

The English Learners Administrators Network (ELAN) is a peer-to-peer professional network that meets throughout the year to focus on and discuss relevant topics in the EL space. [Learn more on our website.](#)