




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education 

DATE: February 14, 2019

SUBJECT: English as a Second Language (ESL) Courses and Graduation Rate

English learners represent an increasing percentage of Connecticut's student population. They have grown from approximately 5.7 percent in 2013-14 to 7.2 percent in 2017-18. High-quality, comprehensive and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and bilingual programs are essential for English learners to acquire the language necessary to successfully engage with grade-level academic content.

During the validation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate data, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) noted some anomalies with regard to the high school courses completed by some English learners in select districts. Specifically, the CSDE is observing that the only English courses completed by these English learners during all years of high school toward high school graduation is English as a Second Language or ESL.

The CSDE has been working with the identified districts to seek additional evidence that these English learners may have indeed completed the required English courses toward high school graduation. If, however, such evidence cannot be provided, then those English learners cannot be counted as graduates toward the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate calculations.

Please note that subsection (g) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-221a stipulates that only courses that are in accordance with the state-wide subject matter content standards adopted by the State Board of Education shall satisfy the high school graduation requirements. The subject matter content standards adopted by the State Board of Education for English are the Common Core State Standards which are referred to in Connecticut as the Connecticut Core Standards.

For technical assistance around ESL and bilingual education programming strategies for English learners, please contact Megan Alubicki Flick at (860) 713-6786 or megan.alubicki@ct.gov. For questions about the cohort graduation rate calculations, please contact Francis Apaloo at (860) 713-6874 francis.apaloo@ct.gov.

Thank you.

cc: Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer
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