



GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10

DATE OF MEETING: May 5, 2015

TITLE: English as a Second Language Credit

BACKGROUND:

As the state began the mandatory AzMERIT assessments this year, an interesting dilemma presented itself. Unlike the AIMS test which was a “high stakes” test that could have been taken a total of five times during a student’s high school experience, the AzMERIT End of Course (EOC) exams are tied to specific coursework. This posed a new and unanticipated challenge for our English Language Learners.

In the past, students who were receiving instruction in writing as part of their English Language Learners (ELL) 4-hour block were registered in and receiving credit for specific English classes (English, 9, 10, 11, and 12). This year, we had approximately 100 students at Amphitheater High School (AHS) who are classified at the pre-emergent, emergent, or basic levels of English proficiency based on their AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment) scores; these are the three lowest levels of proficiency. Thirty-nine (39) of those students are classified as pre-emergent – basically non-English speaking. And yet, because of past practice, they were registered in English 9. As a result, those students were required to take the AzMERIT End-of-Course exam for English 9. Our experience working with students over the years at AHS indicates that once they are at the intermediate level, they can be successful (with appropriately scaffolded instruction) in a regular English class.

Further investigation indicated that Amphi was not alone in the state in wrestling with this new issue. Jayne Huseby, Language Acquisition, did some research on the topic by talking to her counterparts around the state. Many of those districts are moving to solve this issue in the manner we are recommending.

The Arizona Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition Services provided the following information from the Administrative Code (Board Rule):

R7-2-302.2 Minimum Course of Study and Competency Requirements for Graduation from High School Beginning with the Graduation Class of 2013:

1. The awarding of a credit toward the completion of high school graduation requirements shall be based on successful completion of the subject area requirements prescribed by the State Board, local school district governing boards and charter schools as follows:

- 1.a. Four credits of English or English as a Second Language (ESL), which shall include but not be limited to the following: grammar, writing, and reading skills, advanced grammar, composition, American literature, advanced composition, research methods and skills and literature.

Currently, only students enrolled in our English 9, 10, or 11 courses are mandated to take the AzMERIT End-of-Course exams. By adding English as a Second Language (ESL) Language Arts to our course options, these least proficient students would be exempt until they reach the “intermediate” level and are enrolled in a true, high school level English class.

RECOMMENDATION:

The administration recommends the Board authorize three new course titles which would indicate the grade level of an English Language Development (ELD) student at the pre-emergent, emergent, or basic level who is enrolled in the 4-hour English Language Development course. The courses would be called English as a Second Language (ESL) Language Arts 9, English as a Second Language (ESL) Language Arts 10, and English as a Second Language (ESL) Language Arts 11. Each of these courses would carry an English credit. Students would need to attain their final required English credit through enrollment in a regular English class.

The standards addressed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Language Arts courses would be the English Language Development state approved standards.

INITIATED BY:

Monica Nelson, Associate Superintendent

Date: April 27, 2015



Patrick Nelson, Superintendent