



## Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

— Making a positive difference through education and service —

### Memorandum

November 13, 2008

**TO:** School Administrators  
ELL Coordinators

**FROM:** Yaya Badji, Supervisor  
Federal Discretionary Grants

**SUBJECT:** English Language Learners (ELL) Retention - Graduation

There have been several inquiries from school district personnel related to ELL retention and graduation requirements. I would like to confirm that ELLs cannot be retained solely because of English language barriers. Grades represent what the student understands about the subject matter, after appropriate modifications and interventions have been documented, not the level of English proficiency.

Page 7 of the current Graduation Handbook states the following: "Transfer students from another state, country, or a home school may, by local policy, be graduated upon successful completion of an individualized program of studies which school officials, parents and students agree will prepare the students for post-high school goals, even though the program of studies may not include 24 units of credit as defined in Missouri. Seniors transferring from other states or countries may be graduated without meeting the requirement of Section 170.011, RSMo." (U.S. and Missouri Constitutions and American History and Government).

Page 65 of the Administrative Manual, Consolidated Federal Programs, indicates the following: "There are no restrictions on how many ESOL classes a school may accept for credit towards graduation. Students completing 'sheltered ESOL' content classes should receive content credit. ESOL classes should qualify for communications arts credit. Mainstream classes may reflect LEP modifications (for example, ESOL American History or ESOL Chemistry)."

Schools must follow local guidelines or policies. Pro-active steps to involve parents and to modify/adapt the curriculum to meet the ELLs' needs require early dedication of the involved school personnel. The graduation handbook adds the following: "Local boards of education must adopt and disseminate written policies concerning graduation. The policies must clearly set forth all requirements and **all allowable variations.**"

If you have more questions concerning this issue, please feel free to contact me by phone at 573-522-1567 or at the address given below.

**References:** pages 14, 24, and 27: *Educating Linguistically Diverse Students handbook*  
Page 7: Graduation Handbook (DESE 3341-53 1/07)  
Page 65: Administrative Manual, Consolidated Federal Programs