

Multilingual Learners Program Vision, Overview and Handbook

Vision: West Yellowstone recognizes that multilingual learners bring tremendous assets in their knowledge and experiences to this school and community. Multilingual Learners come from a variety of backgrounds and speak a language other than English, or use a different variety of English at home or in their community. A strong and successful English learner program requires years-long support of the entire school and community. We intend to:

- Actively affirm and build up multilingual students' diverse identities
- Value and encourage the use of students' home languages in school and at home
- Build on existing knowledge to help students attain proficiency in academic English
- Provide newcomer students with academic support in their dominant language (usually Spanish)
- Prepare students to be successful in a multilingual and globalized world

West Yellowstone's Unique Context: As of April 2021, all 47 of West Yellowstone's multilingual students share Spanish as a home language or heritage language. This presents the possibility for fantastic opportunities in multilingual education. Many of West Yellowstone's multilingual learners appear to be English dominant, but their linguistic realities are rich and more complex than is obvious from mostly English interactions at school. It is common that after about second grade, students master English better than their home language within a school context. In fact many students use primarily English at home and may have only passive knowledge of their heritage language. However, despite this apparent dominance of English, it is important to note that many have grown up using Spanish at home and may enter Kindergarten with little knowledge of English, OR little knowledge of the academic English varieties used in instruction at school. As such, many students who might appear proficient in English are identified English learners and are required to be provided with ELL services. It is our duty and obligation to ensure these students receive the services and support they deserve and are required by law. All ELL students regardless of proficiency level need additional support in understanding and using academic language. While many students in West Yellowstone have been formally educated only in English, a handful of students (as of April 2021) have gone to school in Spanish for an extended period of time and also use that language at home. These students may especially benefit from bilingual materials and support in literacy in both languages.

Overview: West Yellowstone's multilingual learners program adheres to procedures recommended and required by the State of Montana and is also flexible to best fit the needs of the students. Please see [Montana OPI ELLs](#) for details and guidance on serving ELL students. Research shows bilingual or multilingual education helps students achieve the most success in our increasingly globalized world. As a fully bilingual program is not immediately possible for this year, ELL support is best provided in the main classroom and in small separate groups, when appropriate. Students benefit most from consistency and staying in their main classrooms as much as possible. With the high number of EL students (47 as of April 2021) and the limited availability of EL specialists (0.5 FTE as of April 2021), the main classroom is where most

students will spend the vast majority of their time. During designated periods each day, the ELL specialist will perform the following functions, depending on the needs of the day, week or month:

1. Act as ELL coordinator
 - a. Developing student and program-wide goals, progress monitoring including quarterly check-ins with teachers and annual student reviews, ELL program management including entry and exit requirements, data evaluation and other administrative functions
 - b. Assisting teachers with planning and developing language objectives and scaffolds for them to use in their class. This can include co-planning and even co-teaching lessons, time permitting.
 - c. Creating PD for classroom teachers
 - d. Leading the ELL committee
 - e. Ensure ELL accommodations are entered in systems and made known to test administrators for regular standardized tests such as: ACT, SBAC, STAR
 - f. Supervising and debriefing with High School TA's placed in elementary classrooms to assist with Spanish-speaking students
 - g. Attend IEP meetings and work with SPED for EL students who are also in SPED. Ensure necessary accommodations are available on WIDA test.
 - h. Communicate with parents and keep them up to date on student progress and program changes
2. Act as ELL specialist
 - a. Assist students to use the academic language that is required to engage with the content in each day's lesson. For most students this will mean extra supports and scaffolds in class from the ELL specialist, TAs and the main teacher. Some students will benefit most from separate time in the ELL room specifically focused on English language development, and many students may have some separated/pull-out time to work on key academic language in preparation for that day's lesson.
 - b. Co-teaching (time and resources permitting...)
3. Act as test administrator and coordinator
 - a. Stay up to date on trainings and test administration certification
 - b. Act as district coordinator for the WIDA screener and ACCESS tests
 - c. Administer the WIDA screeners and Access tests
 - d. Administer or assist with SBAC testing of ELL students as needed

West Yellowstone offers 3 levels of ELL support:

1. "Sheltered Instruction or Push-in": This is the "default" support level and will benefit most West Yellowstone students. Students will remain full time in their regular classroom(s). The ELL specialist(s), the main classroom teacher and aides or assistants as needed will

provide in-person support during class and/or will work with the teacher to develop scaffolds and EL-focused materials. The main classroom teacher should be trained in sheltered instruction techniques. Time permitting, an EL specialist can co-teach with the main classroom teacher, but this requires significant time and planning in order to be effective.

As this is the default service level, all students at the beginning of each year will start in their regular classes full-time until a decision is made to change their EL service level. Determining which students will remain in this service level is a decision to be made by the EL teacher, main classroom teacher, IEP team (when applicable) and administration.

Criteria to remain in “sheltered instruction or push-in” may include but are not limited to:

1. Previous year’s WIDA ACCESS overall proficiency score of 4.0 or higher for grades 4-12 and 3.5 or higher for 1-3.
2. Current year STAR testing (in English) score of no less than .5 year below grade level for grades k-3 and no less than 1 year below grade level for grades 4-6
3. Main classroom and EL specialist observations of academic language proficiency and needs in class

2. “Frontload language session”: Students will receive 30 minutes of special dedicated support time directly with the EL specialist on a scheduled or as-needed basis. These sessions may center on previewing content (with a focus on developing academic language) for upcoming lessons that day/week, or working on lessons or assignments that are unfinished or that the student needs extra time and support to complete. Sessions can happen separately outside the class, or inside the classroom. For grades 7-12, these sessions should occur during a study hall or advisory period. The goal with this service level is to target EL instruction to exactly what the students are doing in their main classes, so that working on language (syntax, vocab, grammar) will have a direct positive impact on their participation and work in the class that very week. This should be done ideally during independent work times or where disruption to their regular class is minimal. It is not advised the students miss instructional time or comprehensible input in their main class.

Criteria to qualify for frontload language session include:

1. Previous year’s WIDA ACCESS overall proficiency score of 3.9 or lower for grades 4-12 or 3.4 or lower for 1-3
2. Current year STAR testing (in English) reading score of more than 0.5 year below grade level for grades k-3 and more than 1 year below grade level for grades 4-6
3. Main classroom and EL teacher observations of academic language proficiency and needs in class

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3. “English Language Development (ELD) pull-out”: Students with the highest EL needs will benefit from separate English language lessons. These students usually include newcomers or those with limited or interrupted formal education. ELD pull-out should be conducted during a study hall or advisory period (for 7-12) and should focus on social language skills and/or basic academic reading, writing and speaking skills in English. These pull-out sessions should have a language focus and may not necessarily be strongly tied to the content being taught in the main classes, although it is recommended to work within the context of their content when possible.

Criteria to qualify for ELD pull-out include:

1. Previous year’s WIDA access score of below 1.5 for all grades OR
2. WIDA screener overall score of below 2.0
3. Results of ELP checklist indicate difficulty in comprehension and expression in social English
4. Main classroom and EL teacher observations of general language proficiency in class

General ELL Best Practices and Accommodations for all multilingual learners:

- Develop specific language objectives at the unit and lesson level. Clarify what academic language students need to use to be able to engage with the content at their level.
- Validate and uplift students’ cultural backgrounds and knowledge. Provide opportunities for them to share their experiences and expertise, even if this knowledge is not in the same way you are teaching in class. Let them teach the class some of their home language!
- Group students strategically and diversely so that students with the same home language may communicate to each other in that language, but also with students who are proficient in English. Avoid consistently grouping all speakers of one language together.
- Make liberal use of graphic organizers for scaffolding language content
- Make liberal use of sentence starters to help students start to use the academic language required for the lesson or unit
- Make liberal use of images to accompany language and content instruction
- New vocabulary should be presented in a meaningful context. Use in sentences that would be meaningful to the child’s knowledge. When working on phonics, the meanings of the words should be clear to the students.

- Be aware of and mindful of students' phonemic awareness. This is not universal and varies by language. Spanish does not have the sounds "th," short i, short u; b and v are virtually the same; t and d are very similar, among others...
- Do not assume English learners (however "fluent" they are) have the same vocabulary knowledge or life experiences as other students. For example: Materials presenting a two story home, or a family eating peanut butter sandwiches and milk for lunch may not be relevant or meaningful to many students from a variety of backgrounds.
- Encourage the use of the home language in class and at home

Procedures for EL Student Identification

West Yellowstone School follows requirements and recommendations of Montana OPI for the identification of EL students. Teachers or administration should NEVER assume a child is an English learner because of their name or background. Identification decisions are made based on language screener data and classroom observations. See below (taken from the Montana English Learner Checklist) for appropriate steps to take:

1. The families of ALL newly enrolled students in the district must be sent a Home Language Survey at the time of enrollment. A template for this can be found on the OPI website.
2. The EL Coordinator administers the WIDA screener (or WAPT for Kindergarten) to students whose families indicated use OR impact of a language other than English in the home. This MUST be done within 14 days of the beginning of the year or within 14 days of receiving the home language survey.
 - a. NOTE: The home language survey is only 1 indicator of a potential EL. The teacher, EL specialist or administration can recommend a student be screened if they observe/suspect another language may be impacting the student's English proficiency. An observation checklist is available [here](#).
3. Newly identified students and transfer students are marked correctly in AIM. The District Clerk should do this by mid-October of each year.
4. Parents/Guardians of newly identified ELs are notified with an EL placement letter within 30 days of enrollment. This should be provided in the preferred language of the family.
5. The EL Specialist along with the main classroom teacher determine the appropriate service level for the student. This may be determined based on results of the WIDA screener and classroom observations. Parents have the right to opt out of ELL services, but classroom teachers should still be using best practices and accommodations for all identified EL students.
6. The appropriate level of EL support and instruction begin by November. Changes may be made at any time to best fit the needs of the student and the ELL program as a whole.

Procedures for EL Student Progress Reporting and Monitoring

1. Prior to release of grades before the end of each quarter, EL specialist meets with each student's main classroom teacher (k-6) and ELA teacher (7-12) to review student language goals and discuss progress towards those goals. Test data, grades and informal observations can be used.
2. Each year immediately following receipt of WIDA results in the Spring, a formal review of student progress will take place. A review document showing student strengths, language goals, WIDA scores and any parent or teacher concerns will be drafted and shared with parents and teachers. This is much like an IEP document, although shorter.
3. Ideally an in-person meeting to discuss the student's progress will be conducted with a parent, EL specialist, main classroom teacher(s), an admin member, and the student themselves (grades 7-12 only?). Due to the high numbers of EL students, in-person meetings may be prioritized for those with WIDA scores below 4.0 or at the discretion of the EL specialist. If an in-person meeting is not possible, the document may be shared electronically with all the interested parties.
4. All teachers of the student must read and sign the annual ELL progress report.

Procedures for EL Student Exiting

1. Review WIDA Access results (May?) and identify any students with overall scores of 4.7 or higher.
2. Discuss results with main classroom teacher and compare to student progress in class and other standardized testing scores
3. If a determination is made to exit a student, this should be cleared with administration and an exit letter is sent out to the family.
4. Student is exited in AIM by the District Clerk before the end of the school year. This student is no longer counted in the school's total EL numbers, but will remain monitored for 2 years.

Procedures for Monitoring Exited Students

1. Classroom teachers should be notified at the beginning of each year of any exited EL students in their classes.
2. Standard ELL best practices and strategies may continue to be used in class, as needed to support the student. The student should not be pulled out for separate ELL services.
3. A brief annual review with the EL specialist and classroom teachers should be conducted in the Spring (may be done over e-mail) to analyze the student's progress in class and grade level achievement on standardized testing.
4. If a student falls significantly behind, rejoining the EL program the following year can be done.

ELL Students and SPED

It is not uncommon in schools across the nation for multilingual learners to be over-identified as needing special education services. West Yellowstone has done a

great job in the past at not over-referring ELs to SPED, however there is now a set process to go through prior to making any major decisions about a student's referral to SPED or other support beyond regular interventions. This is to try to separate out what student challenges may be a result of language proficiency or other cognitive disabilities.

1. Any main classroom teacher who suspects an EL student should be evaluated, should make this known to the ELL coordinator along with the Resource and SPED team
2. The ELL coordinator will lead the use of the 16-point Critical Data Matrix and checklist
3. If the results of the checklist indicate a referral may be recommended, the teachers and other interested parties should proceed with the evaluation. If the results indicate that more interventions are needed or the data is not clear, then the EL coordinator will suggest to try additional interventions or to modify the student's EL service level.

Suggested annual Schedule for EL program:

September: Send out home language survey, WIDA screening of Kindergarten and potential new EL students, Students getting settled and comfortable in their main classes, Introductions and letters to parents, finalizing and communicating student goals and accommodations based on current year WIDA scores

Late September-October: Develop daily schedule, begin work with students, develop goals and structure for TAs, form ELL committee and set purpose and schedule

October-November: Solidify daily ELL schedule, focus EL student work on WIDA practice, begin debriefs with TAs, quarterly check in with teachers on student progress, participate in parent-teacher conferences with main classroom teachers

November-December: WIDA Access test prep/training as needed and administration, goal to complete at least grades 6-12, quarterly check in with teachers on student progress

January: WIDA Access testing completion for all grades

February-March: ELL Instruction, support and monitoring, quarterly check in with teachers on student progress

April- Mid May: ACCESS Results come back, communicate results to parents, recommend students for exiting ELL program, hold annual progress report/review for each EL student (in person meeting with parent, teacher, admin and ELL specialist preferred), administer or assist with SBAC testing, continue ELL support and instruction as is possible

Mid May-June: Wrap up direct ELL support and instruction, finish annual progress reports/reviews, reflect on successes and challenges of the year, start developing student and program goals for following year, ensure all exited students are indeed exited and ready for 2 years of monitoring, communicate an end of year letter to parents, ensure home language survey is ready for Kindergarten and new student enrollment