

Whitnall School District

Multilingual Learners Program Handbook

INTRODUCTION

The culturally and linguistically diverse student population of the Whitnall School District brings over 29 different native languages into our classrooms. We view learning a second language as an asset and treat second language learners as such. The Multilingual Learner Program aims to enable students to become competent in the English language's understanding, speaking, listening, reading, and writing through developing literacy and academic skills in grade-level content areas.

Enrollment and Identification

All families complete the Home Language Survey upon enrollment. The Home Language Survey contains the following questions:

1. Was the first language spoken by the child English?
2. What was the first language spoken?
3. What language is most often spoken at home?
4. What language is most often spoken with friends and others?

The answers to these questions are communicated to the district ML (Multilingual Learner) teacher. Based on the Home Language Survey results, and with a consenting signature from the parents or guardians, the WIDA screener may be administered. This screener provides a baseline proficiency level for the student's reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English. Students new to the district will complete the WIDA screener within thirty days of enrollment (at the beginning of the school year), or within two weeks if they arrive after the first thirty days of the school year. Results of the WIDA screener are communicated to the district data person, the parent/guardian, and the student's teachers. Parents may opt their child out of receiving ML services, this must be communicated to the district in writing.

Annual Assessment of Language Proficiency

The World-Class Instructional Design Assessment Consortium (WIDA) ACCESS for MLs assessment is the tool used to determine the level of English proficiency for multilingual learners. Students identified as multilingual learners with proficiency levels 1 - 4.9 take the WIDA ACCESS assessment each year during the testing window (usually in December or January) until they are reclassified as fully English proficient. WIDA assessment tools are used to determine proficiency in four English language proficiency domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ACCESS for ELLs assessments are made up of three tiers (A, B, and C) over five grade-level clusters: Kindergarten, Grades 1-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. Students receive proficiency level scores in each of the four skill area subtests as well as a composite score. The composite score determines the overall proficiency level, ranging from 1 (Beginning) to 6 (Reaching).

WIDA Performance Levels

6 - Reaching	-Specialized or technical language reflective of the content area at grade level. -A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade-level English -Oral or written communication in English comparable to proficient English peers
5 - Bridging	-The technical language of the content areas -A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports -Oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English proficient peers when presented with grade-level text.
4-Expanding	-Specific and some technical language of the content areas -A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse

	or multiple paragraphs -Oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with occasional visual and graphic support
3-Developing	-General and some specific language of the content areas -Expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs -Oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication but retain much of its meaning when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with occasional visual and graphic support
2 - Beginning	-General language related to the content areas -Phrases or short sentences -Oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with visual and graphic support
1 - Entering	-Pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas -Words phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-questions, or statements with visual and graphic support

Fully English Proficient (FEP) students will be monitored by the ML staff member(s) of the school for two school years following exit and will receive support and further assessments if there is a need or concern brought to the team by one of the stakeholders. Multilingual Learners who score a **minimum** of a 4.5 composite score on the ACCESS for ELLs **may** be exited following the state-defined [Multiple Indicators of Progress](#) protocol.

Individualized Language Plan

Each Multilingual learner has an **Individualized Language Plan** (ILP) created by the ML teacher. The ILP contains the most recent ACCESS for ELLs proficiency data, language development goals, and modifications and accommodations for classwork and assessments. ILPs are shared with teaching staff and parents/guardians. ILPs should be reviewed and updated as needed at the end of each calendar year.

Multilingual Learners Grading Guidelines

Learning English, and in particular, academic English, is a process that takes time. On average, it takes from five to seven years for a student to become fully proficient. During this time, the district must ensure that English language learners are not **being discriminated against in the assignment of grades due to a language barrier**. Assignments and assessments should be modified. Teachers should consider grading on progress as well as content knowledge.

Classroom and content area teachers can reach out to the EL teacher for guidelines and support in classroom modifications. Generally speaking, shortening the length and number of assignments/assessments is very helpful, as it takes much longer to process information in a new language. Simplifying the language of assessments and assignments helps as well. Offering an option for visual (instead of verbal) or spoken responses is also helpful to those students with low English proficiency levels. It is helpful to think about the “big picture” of concepts. Classroom and content area teachers can think about the top two or three most important concepts to focus assignments and assessments.

Teachers must use extreme caution when considering assigning an “F” to an English language learner. Failing grades cannot be made on the basis of English language proficiency, which includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. The burden of proof

falls on the teacher. This means that the teacher would need to show that they have provided appropriate instruction (instruction that is accessible to the student, based on their language level), as well as appropriate modifications and accommodations to assignments and assessments.

Instructional Strategies

There are many things a classroom or content area teacher can do to make instruction easier for English language learners to understand. Here are some research-based ideas:

- ☐ Add graphic organizers, pictures, charts, maps and diagrams.
- ☐ Speak a bit slower
- ☐ Use frequent pauses and repetitions of key ideas
- ☐ Use longer wait time to allow students to formulate answers
- ☐ Use yes or no questions
- ☐ Include frequent comprehension checks
- ☐ Highlight central concepts (rather than details)
- ☐ Build on previous knowledge
- ☐ Use partner and small group activities
- ☐ Think of language skill development as well as content knowledge development
- ☐ Pre Teach to build background knowledge and vocabulary

English language Learner Support

English language learners participate in the universal curriculum in their classroom instructional program. As a supplement to regular classroom instruction, English language learners receive regularly scheduled specialized instruction in English language acquisition. Initially, the emphasis for newcomers is on the teaching of “survival” language, following directions, and basic social and instructional English. As English proficiency grows, emphasis is placed on academic English. Support and assistance in universal curriculum content can be provided, but the English language learner support does not take the place of regular classroom instruction. Frequency and duration of support sessions are based on the English language proficiency and other student needs.

The amount of support each English language learner receives from the ML teacher varies based on student need. Students with lower proficiency levels generally receive more support each week than those with more advanced language skills. Older students also generally receive more support than younger students. Students with specific needs (such as potential learning difficulties) may also receive more support. Support ranges from 30 minutes/once per week for students with higher proficiency levels (greater than 3.5), who are demonstrating academic proficiency, to 45 minutes/three per week for students with lower proficiency levels. Students who are not demonstrating academic proficiency also receive 45 minutes/three times per week. The ML teacher communicates with classroom and content area teachers weekly, to discuss student progress and upcoming instruction and assessment.

The paraprofessional works, under the direction of the ML teacher. The paraprofessional works in the classroom of ML students and supports them in content areas.

For Additional Support and Information

Any questions or concerns about the process of providing services to multilingual learners, or if you have a student who you believe may need ML support, please contact the district multilingual learners teacher.

Resources

[WIDA ELD Standards Framework 2020](#)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [English learners Policy Handbook](#)