

LANGUAGE ACCESS WORKGROUP

Summary of Report to the Legislature October 2020

Read the full report [here](#)

Purpose

In 2019, the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1130 ([ESHB 1130](#)) which created the Language Access Workgroup. The purpose of the workgroup is to advise the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), and others, on specific strategies meant to improve meaningful, equitable access for public school students and their family members who have language access barriers. The 2020 Language Access Report to the Legislature provides a series of recommendations, tools and examples as a first step towards these goals.

Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to the diverse experiences of its members, the Language Access Workgroup sought to periodically engage with and receive feedback from key stakeholders on language access in schools and proposed recommendations.

Engagement efforts included the following:

- Public comment periods at meetings
- Surveys distributed to school and district staff, community based organizations that work with families, and family members
- Presentations to stakeholder groups
- Focus groups with families in their native languages including: Mandarin, Cantonese, Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya and Spanish.

Glossary of key terms

Family Engagement establishes two-way communication built on a foundation of social justice practice that encourages a welcoming environment while: creating trust, recognizing and celebrating differences and culture, individualizing access, building relationships, supporting advocacy and education of rights, and engaging families and communities as partners in the education of children.

Interpretation: The process of first fully understanding, analyzing and processing a spoken or signed message and then faithfully rendering it into another spoken or signed language.

Language Access: Includes plans, policies, procedures and services meant to establish meaningful, two-way communication between the district/school and family members with limited English proficiency (LEP), who are Deaf, blind or need other communication assistance, and promote access for such families to the programs, services, and activities of the district/school.

Other modes of communication: Includes braille, recorded audio and video, and any other language assistance outside of translation and spoken or signed language interpretation.

Translation: The process comprising the creation of a written target text, based on a source text, in such a way that the content and in many cases, the form of the two texts, can be considered equivalent.

Transcription: In this context, transcription is the process of converting printed text to braille.

Recommendations

1. Language Access Program

To: OSPI, WSSDA

1.a Adopt the foundational values for language access & family engagement, essential elements of an effective language access program and plan for its implementation.

1.b Develop and share a toolkit to help public schools assess the language needs of their communities and develop, implement, and evaluate their language access plans and services.

2. Program for Technical Assistance

To: OSPI, Legislature, Other

Creation and funding of:

- School-level Language Access Coordinators
- District-level Language Access Coordinators
- A state-level, OSPI Language Access Technical Assistance Program

3. Glossary of Education Terminology

To: OSPI

The OSPI Language Access Technical Assistance Program work should with stakeholders, including community members and school personnel, to develop, define and translate a list of education terminology.

Tiered System of Interpreter Standards & Interpreter Testing System

To: OSPI, Legislature, DSHS

4. Adopt a tiered system of interpreter requirements in education related settings based on the type of interpreted interaction.

5. OSPI develop a supplemental education test to be part of the current Department of Social Health Services (DSHS) testing system.

Fund DSHS to increase the number of languages for which they fully certify interpreters.

6. Best Practices

To: OSPI, Schools and School Districts

Implement the recommended best practices for:

6.a the use of interpreters and remote interpretation services and

6.b translation of individualized education programs (IEPs) and translated documents in other formats.

7. Scheduling Spoken-Language Interpretation

To: Department of Enterprise Services (DES)

Provide immediate and ongoing training via webinars and other tools for school personnel on how to use the new DES spoken-language scheduling portal.

8. Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards of Practice

To: Legislature, OSPI

Require OSPI to write WACs establishing the professional responsibility and standards of practice for interpreters of spoken and sign languages in educational settings outside of the classroom.

9. Data Collection and Use

To: OSPI

9.a Migrant and Bilingual Education at OSPI should review and revise, with community feedback, the use of the Home Language Survey to collect information for the identification of both the student and family's primary language.

To: Schools and School Districts

9.b Survey meeting participants on interpreter effectiveness after each interpreted meeting.

To: OSPI

9.c Encourage schools and school districts to use [DES master contract 03514](#) to schedule interpretation services online and establish a data sharing agreement with the vendor to obtain and display district-level data on interpretation services requests on a data dashboard.

9. Continued

To: Legislature

9.d Require that the interpreter provided data collection in Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1130 be reported to OSPI and made publicly available.

10. Updates to WSSDA’s Model Policies and Procedures

To: WSSDA

Consolidate the Effective Communication and Language Access policies and procedures and make other recommended updates.

Appendices include samples of a: district self-assessment, code of professional responsibility and standards of practice for interpreters, interpreter feedback form and pre-session interpretation script.

Future Work

The Language Access Workgroup has also defined several areas for future work including:

Higher education

Work with institutes of higher education in Washington to evaluate the availability of interpreter and translator preparation programs and the sufficiency of these programs to meet the current and projected future demand for interpreters and translators.

Feasibility study

Conduct a feasibility study to estimate the cost and capacity of the current system to develop and administer an educational interpretation test and to add additional languages to the DSHS interpreter testing system.

Master contracts

Partner with the Department of Enterprise Services on the suite of master contracts for interpretation and translation to ensure that they meet the specific needs of families, schools and school districts.

Quotes from Families

“When I ask for an interpreter, they make you feel bad. I asked them to translate my son’s IEP and they told me they couldn’t because over 30 languages are spoken in their district and this would be impossible to do for me.” - Spanish Speaking Parent

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“Equal communication access for Deaf parents is truly needed to better help educate our children.” - Family and Community Survey Response

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“99% of the time they use a language line and the interpreter does not speak fluent Somali or sometimes even fluent English. Also, the translations are being done through Google which is not providing correct translations.” - Somali Speaking Parent

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“My brother has special needs. Sometimes, I can help him login and go to class. But, now I’m busy with classes too so I can’t help him. My mom can’t help my brother because it is hard to use the technology, but I can’t be all the time. Even when he can login, it doesn’t mean that he’s learning. Because of his disability, he needs support and I cannot do it all.” - Child of Tigrinya Speaking parent

Links:

[Read the full report here](#)

Survey reports:

- [school and district staff](#)
- [community based organizations](#)
- [family members](#)

[Workgroup website](#)

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