



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

*Washington State
Multilingual Learners:
Policies and Practice Guide*

2023

CHAPTER 11: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Communication with Parents and Language Access

School districts must provide vital communications in a language that a parent or guardian can understand ([WAC 292-160-010](#)). Under Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act and as indicated in the [2015 Dear Colleague Letter](#), LEAs must provide language assistance to EL families effectively with appropriate, competent staff or appropriate and competent outside resources.

Vital communications include written and oral communications containing information that is critical for accessing educational programs and opportunities or is required by law. This also includes communications that could have negative consequences for a student's education if the information is not provided in an accurate or timely manner. Vital oral and written communications may include, but are not limited to, those listed in the table below.

Vital Oral Communications include:	Vital Written Communications include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent-teacher conferences• Special education meetings• Meetings regarding student discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program information and applications• Discipline notices• Consent forms• Complaint forms• Notices of rights• Letters or notices that require a response

Translation or interpretation of vital information must be done by a qualified interpreter or translator and never by a student.

Washington state legislation ([RCW 28A.183.050](#)) now requires school districts to annually collect the language in which each student and student's family prefers to communicate. Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, districts are required to report this information to OSPI through CEDARS.

To assist districts in the process of collecting this data, questions relating to parents' or guardians' preferred language are included on the state's [Home Language Survey](#). Since parents' or guardians' preferred language for communication may change over time, districts are required to provide families the opportunity to update this information annually. School districts should also inform the district and building staff how to access and coordinate translation and interpretation services when needed.

In most cases, interpretation and translation services are a general education responsibility when such services are related to a school district's core instructional services (BEA), general operational/administrative protocols, and requirements.

School districts may be able to utilize program-specific funding for interpretation or translation services when the purpose of the communication is for specific programs:

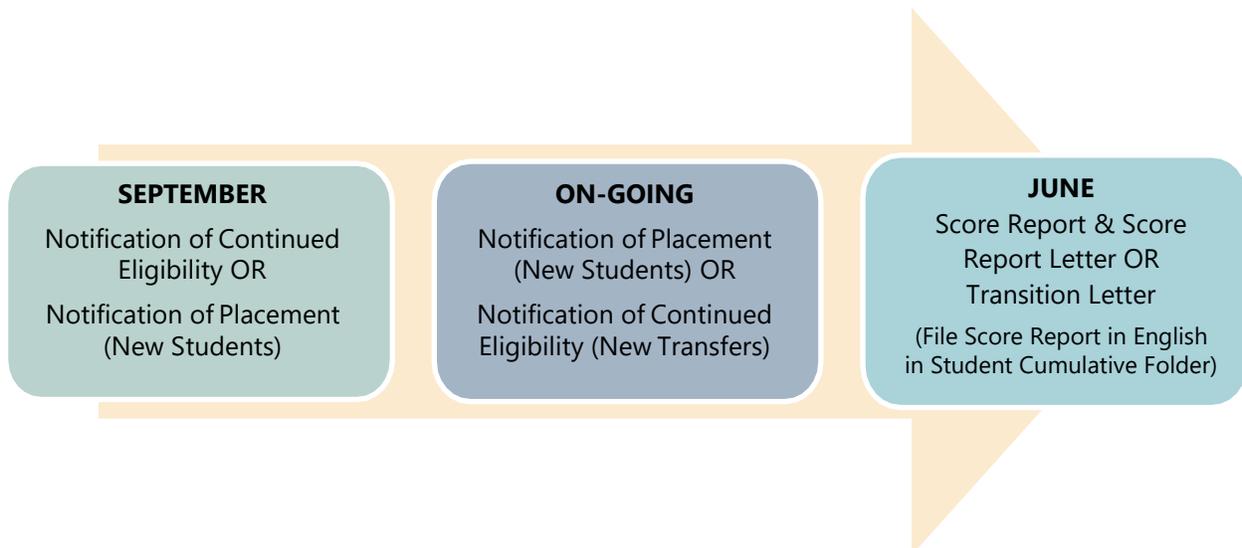
- Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program (TBIP) funds can be used to provide translation or interpretation services for TBIP-related communications.
- Title III funds can supplement TBIP to provide information to parents about the district's English language development program.
- Title III funds can be used to support the costs of interpretation and translation services that serve to accommodate and facilitate parent outreach requirements under Title III.

Neither TBIP nor Title III can fund translation or interpretation services for school policies, discipline, health issues, free-and-reduced-lunch programs, state-mandated testing, promotion and graduation requirements, parent-teacher conferences, school newsletters, all-school events, special education procedures, or other information that is also communicated to parents of students who are not eligible for TBIP.

To learn about phone interpretation or access online training and sample translated documents, visit [OSPI's Interpretation and Translation Services](#) website.

Family Notification of Eligibility

Parental permission is not needed to assess a student's English language proficiency for placement purposes except under circumstances as outlined in the TBIP procedures and Title III procedures for identifying Title III-eligible Native American students. Districts must notify families when a student initially qualifies for English language development support services. Districts must also send families their student's results on the annual state language proficiency assessment and notification of whether the student continues to qualify for services.



Notification of initial placement or continued eligibility must be sent to parents/guardians no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of placement if the student qualifies for language support services during the school year.

Notification	Required by TBIP?	Required by Title III?
Potential Eligibility, Prior to Placement Testing	No	Only when testing Native American students who are not eligible for TBIP.
Initial Placement in Program	Yes (with parents' right to opt out of services)	Yes (with all eight Title III-required components)
Continued Placement in Program	Yes (with parents' right to opt out of services)	Yes (with all eight Title III-required components)
Annual Score Report and Score Report Letter	Not required but recommended	Yes
Transition from Program	Not required but recommended	Yes

Although TBIP legislation does not specify the information to be included in the family notification letter, Title I requires that the parent notification letter include the following components (ESEA Title I Section 1112 (e)(3)):

- The reasons for the identification of their child as an English Learner and the need for placement in a language instruction educational program.
- The child's level of English proficiency, how such level was assessed, and the status of the child's academic achievement.
- The method of instruction used in the program in which their child is, or will be, participating, and the methods of instruction used in other available programs, including how such programs differ in content, instruction goals, and use of English and a native language in instruction.
- How the program in which their child is or will be participating will meet the educational strengths and needs of the child.
- How such program will specifically help their child learn English as well as meet age- appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation.
- The specific exit requirements for such program, the expected rate of transition from such program into classrooms that are not tailored for English Learners, and the expected rate of graduation from secondary school for such program if funds under this title are used for children in secondary schools.
- In the case of a child with a disability, how such program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child, and

- Information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance detailing:
 - Parents' right to have their child immediately removed from such program upon their request; and
 - Parents' option to decline to enroll their child in such program or to choose another program or method of instruction, if available; and
 - Assisting parents in selecting among various programs and methods of instruction, if more than one program or method is offered by the eligible entity.

Templates are available for these notification letters that includes these required components on the [OSPI Family Communication Templates](#) webpage with translations available in 40 languages. The expected graduation rate can be reported as the most recent district four- and five-year graduation rates. The expected rate of transition can be reported as the median number of years that students remain in the program in the district. These data are provided annually by OSPI to support districts with these required letters. Districts must retain a copy of all parent notification letters in students' cumulative files to demonstrate program compliance.

Parent Waivers

Under the TBIP WAC 392-160-015(2), parents have the right to opt their children out of ELD services. Such a waiver of services must be documented and kept on file by the district. An administrator knowledgeable about the program must communicate the benefits of program participation to parents in a language they can understand prior to allowing this type of waiver.

Districts must document the parent's refusal of TBIP and Title III services and keep a signed copy of the document in the student's cumulative file. The state provides a [translated template](#) that districts may use to document parental refusal of service.

English Language Learners whose parents have waived TBIP/Title III services are reported to the state with an instructional model code of 'P'. Districts do not receive supplemental TBIP or Title III funding for these students but must still periodically review their progress with school staff and annually assess the student's progress toward English language proficiency.

The [2015 Dear Colleague Letter](#) states that districts retain the responsibility to ensure that the student has an equal opportunity to have their English language and academic needs met when parents/guardians decline program participation. Districts can meet this obligation in a variety of ways, including adequate training for classroom teachers on second language acquisition.

Students under a parent waiver must continue to take the annual state English language proficiency assessment until the student meets program exit criteria. TBIP-eligible students who have met exit criteria are eligible for academic supports through TBIP funding if they are not at grade level, regardless of whether they were previously under a parent waiver.

A parent may choose to withdraw the waiver at any time with a written request. In this situation, the district changes the student's instructional model code in CEDARS and begins providing English language development services to the student.

Title III Family Engagement Requirements

Title III requires that LEAs:

- Provide and implement effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplement ELD programs for English learners, which must include parent, family, and community engagement activities.
- Inform parents on how they can be active participants in:
 - Assisting their children to learn English,
 - Achieving high levels in core academic subjects, and
 - Meeting the state's academic content and student academic achievement standards as all students are expected to meet.
- Implement an effective means of outreach to parents, which must include holding and sending notice of opportunities for regular meetings for the purpose of formulating and responding to recommendations from parents of English Learners.
- Strengthen and increase parent, family, and community engagement in programs that serve MLs.

Title III can fund:

- Parent trainings supplemental to trainings offered to all parents, such as ESL classes, technology, homework support, understanding the US school system, and ways parents can help their children succeed academically.
- Costs for parent meetings if agenda items are specific to the EL program.
- Academic enrichment activities for children at meetings for parents of multilingual learners.
- Translation/interpretation specific to the EL program.
- Supplemental activities in situations where the LEA is already meeting its obligations to ensure meaningful communication with EL families in a language the families can understand.
- Other activities as approved in Title III family and community engagement plan, such as home visits.

TBIP and Title III CANNOT fund:

- Parent outreach coordinator or liaison whose duties are to communicate information specific to basic education (discipline, attendance, academic progress in core content areas, school procedures, graduation requirements).
- Family engagement activities which are disassociated from the goals of 1) improving the English language skills of ELs and 2) assisting parents and

families in helping their children improve their academic achievement and becoming active participants in the education of their children.

- Childcare
- Language access obligations to families for non-EL specific messaging, as specified under Title VI and the EEOA.

Food at Family Engagement Meetings

Generally, there is a very high burden of proof to show that paying for food and beverages with federal funds is a “reasonable and necessary cost” to meet the goals and objectives of a federal grant. When an LEA hosts a meeting, the LEA should structure the agenda and location for the meeting so that participants can easily access and purchase their own food and beverages whenever possible.

While there may be some circumstances where the cost of food and beverages would be permissible, it is likely that those circumstances will be rare. Therefore, LEAs will have to make a compelling case that the unique circumstances they have identified would justify food and beverage costs as reasonable and necessary.

Funds of Knowledge Toolkit

The [Funds of Knowledge Toolkit](#) provides resources for gathering information about students’ “funds of knowledge,” which is a term originally used by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) to describe the historical accumulation of abilities, bodies of knowledge, assets, and cultural ways of interacting that were evident in U.S.-Mexican households in Tucson, Arizona. Although these funds of knowledge were demonstrated as culturally, socially, and cognitively complex, it was pointed out that educators were not using them as a resource to enhance their students’ academic progress.

Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti’s (2005) work on teachers engaging families outside of school contexts provided rich examples of how to recognize particular funds of knowledge and apply them in a school setting. In the past decade, many scholars have extended the funds of knowledge concept in a variety of different ways (see Hogg, 2011, and Rodriguez, 2013 for reviews of the literature).

Home Visits Toolkit

The [Home Visits Toolkit](#) provides practical tools to support classroom teachers and other educators in conducting home visits as a means of increasing collaboration with families of multilingual learners and engaging families to learn more about their funds of knowledge.

References

González, N., Moll, L.C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hogg, L. (2011). Funds of knowledge: An investigation of coherence within the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 666-677.

Rodriguez, G. (2011). Power and agency in education: Exploring the pedagogical dimensions of funds of knowledge. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 87-120.

Vélez-Ibáñez, C.G., & Greenberg, J.B. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S. Mexican households. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 313-335.

For more resources on ensuring meaningful communication with parents, see the [U.S. Department of Education's EL Toolkit Chapter 10](#) and their [English Learner Family Toolkit](#).