

Supporting Migratory Children who are English Learners

The purpose of this document is to help migrant education program (MEP) coordinators and other MEP staff determine the need for and select appropriate English learner (EL) supports and instruction to implement during the summer program. A major responsibility of the MEP is to ensure that all enrolled students achieve the state's required measurable program objectives (MPOs). To ensure these MPOs are met, programs must make instruction accessible to all students, including English learners. This document provides pertinent information so that MEP staff are able to follow appropriate and required procedures.

Background – English Learners in the MEP

Migratory children come from diverse backgrounds. Historically in Minnesota, the majority of families have spoken Spanish in the home. More recently, families speaking Somali, Karen and other languages have been identified as eligible for migrant education programming in Minnesota. Today, some families speak both English and at least one other language in the home. Multilingual learners bring a range of experiences, cultural perspectives and educational backgrounds. This is viewed as an asset to the classroom and society in general. Certainly, being bi- or multi-lingual presents multiple benefits to the student's cognitive skills and future abilities to problem solve and think outside the box, characteristics highly valued in the American workplace.

Students who are identified as learning English, using state-approved procedures, are eligible for additional supports in order to access the challenging state academic standards and curriculum. These supports are made available by providing instruction that addresses Minnesota's English language development standards as taught by an appropriately licensed teacher (i.e., they hold a Kindergarten through grade 12 English as a Second Language license). Migrant education programs (MEPs) are expected to support all students' needs, including those of English learners (ELs) that enroll in their programs.

English Learner Definitions

An English learner is defined in Minnesota under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D. 59, subdivision 2 as “a pupil in kindergarten through grade 12 or a prekindergarten student enrolled in an approved voluntary prekindergarten program under section 124D.151 who meets the requirements under subdivision 2a or the following requirements:

1. the pupil, as declared by a parent or guardian uses a language other than English; and
2. the pupil is determined by a valid assessment measuring the pupil's English language proficiency and by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally appropriate assessment instruments, to lack the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English.”

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) make up a specific group of English learners. During the academic year, districts are required to submit its SLIFE count to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) on an annual basis. Signed into law in 2014, the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act, under 2017 Minnesota Statutes, section 124D. 59, subdivision 2a, formally defined this group of English learners in state law as an *English learner* with an interrupted formal education who:

1. comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or usually speaks a language other than English;
2. enters school in the United States after grade 6;
3. has at least two years less schooling than the English learner's peers;
4. functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and,
5. may be preliterate in the English learner's native language.

Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL)

An RAEL is an English learner enrolled in a school in one of the 50 States in the United States or District of Columbia *for less than 12 months* (Minnesota Standardized English Language Procedures; Identification, 2017).

Long-term English Learners (LTEL)

Minnesota does not have a formal definition of long-term English learners within its statute. Also, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) does not formally define long-term English learners. However, under ESSA, all states are required to report the number and percentage of English learners who have not attained English language proficiency within five years of initial classification as an English learner and first enrollment in the local educational agency [ESSA, Section 3122(a)(6)].

English Learner Education Legislation

English learners are addressed in both state and federal legislation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 initially determined that students limited in English language proficiency have a right to a language instruction educational program that provides them access to the academic content instruction that all children receive. Court decisions and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights with the United States Department of Education have described in more detail the responsibilities of school districts. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), delineated more specifically the responsibilities of schools, districts, and states to ensure that ELs become proficient in English and meet the same challenging state academic standards as expected of their English-only peers.

The ESSA provides an opportunity to meaningfully include and support English learners. In the past, Minnesota did not mandate statewide EL entry and exit criteria or procedures. However, as part of ESSA implementation, states are required to develop and implement standardized entry and exit criteria and procedures. For more information on the laws, regulations and court cases surrounding the needs of ELs, see the [English Learners in Minnesota Report](#).

Planning for EL Service in the MEP

MEP has a responsibility to ensure all enrolled students have access to programming, including the measureable program objectives (MPOs) programs implement to address the needs of their students. Therefore, the MEP must swiftly identify which enrolled students qualify for additional support in English language development.

Identifying English Learners

Migratory children come to Minnesota MEPs with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Students enrolling in Minnesota's MEPs *may or may not* be English learners. The following information will help you identify students who are eligible for EL support in your MEP.

Students Already Identified as English Learners

Often the majority of eligible ELs in the MEP may have already been identified during the school year. Careful review of students' files and effective communication with home district staff is essential to avoid unnecessary duplication of identification efforts.

If a student has been identified an EL in a Minnesota school, there will be a record on file (in the student information system [SIS] and in the student's Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System [MARSS] account displaying "EL-Yes" or "LEP-Yes").

If the student has been identified an EL in another state, MEP staff will need to review the student's file from the home state, communicate with home state staff, or refer to the Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX).

Students Whose Files Contain No EL Documentation

Sometimes students' files do not contain any information about English learner identification. Generally, kindergarteners or students new to the country have not been enrolled in a U.S. school and thus have not been through a screening process to qualify for EL support.

Minnesota districts must follow [Minnesota's standardized procedures for identification](#), as required under ESSA, to ensure uniform, accurate and unbiased identification of ELs, using the following two step process:

- 1) **Identify the student's primary language** using parents' or guardians' responses on the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS), **and** *(if the primary language is other than English)*
- 2) **Screen for English language ability** using a state-approved WIDA language proficiency assessment.

In short, all students newly enrolling in Minnesota districts must have a parent or guardian complete the MNLS, found translated into multiple languages on the [TransACT website](#). If the MNLS responses show a language other than English is used, the student must be screened using the age appropriate WIDA Screener to determine level of English proficiency. If a student's English proficiency is below the state criteria, the student is identified as an English learner. ***When the MEP identifies a student as an EL, the MEP must enter that status into MSIX.***

Important: The standardized procedures are required. Students must not be identified as English learners on the basis of race, ethnicity, skin color, name, religion, or solely based on the fact that they speak another language in the home. Screening must be done to determine need and avoid civil rights violations.

Note: If a student has already been identified as an English learner in another Minnesota district or state, the MEP does not need to have parents complete the MNLS or have the student screened.

Placing English Learners into Appropriate Services

The MEP must determine the amount and scope of language development instruction to provide its ELs. If already identified prior to enrollment in the MEP, and the student's home state is a WIDA state (see the [following section](#)), the MEP can use the student's most recent WIDA ACCESS 2.0 assessment scores to determine the amount and scope of service to provide the student during the program.

If the student does not come from a WIDA state (ex. Texas or California, among others), the MEP has two options: 1) talk with the EL teacher or other program staff in the student's home school/district to find out more information about the student's English language ability and the level of service previously provided the student, or 2) assess the student at the MEP using a WIDA language proficiency screener. MEP staff should look at the student's composite and individual domain scores to determine on what areas to focus instruction.

Notifying the Parents/Guardians

Once students are identified as ELs and placed into EL service, it is the program's responsibility to notify the parents or guardians. In the notification letter, the MEP must describe the EL program and how the student was identified as an EL as well as inform the parents of their right to decline services. If a parent expresses a desire to decline EL service, talk with the parent about the benefits of participation in EL services. Encourage the parent to visit the program prior to signing a services refusal letter. The MEP may want to abbreviate the notification form (entitled "English Learner Program Placement") available in 11 languages by logging onto the [TransACT website](#).

Considering Programming

Support may come in various forms ranging from separate pull-out English instruction or co-taught English and content classroom instruction to bilingual support or instruction through the native language. The chosen program model must address the specific English language development needs of the students by implementing Minnesota's [English language development \(ELD\) standards](#). Your district's EL staff team is a valuable resource for support in selecting the summer MEP's English learner program model.

Consider the specific needs of students also identified as SLIFE, RAEL or LTEL ([refer back to definitions above](#)). Provide services that address children's limited or interrupted formal education, children's educational experience in a different culture or the needs of youth whose progress in English has taken more time than expected. For such students, MEP staff may find success by maximizing their students' strengths in their native languages through bilingual support or heritage language programs. Visit the following links for resources to support the needs of [SLIFE](#), [RAELs](#) or [LTELs](#).

Incorporating Minnesota’s English Language Development Standards

WIDA™ (formerly known as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment)

The Minnesota Department of Education joined the WIDA Consortium (formerly known as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) in 2011. The consortium consists of 39 member states with additional states adopting the WIDA English language development (ELD) standards. WIDA advances social, instructional and academic language development and academic achievement for linguistically diverse students through high-quality standards, assessments, research, and professional development for educators. By joining the consortium, MDE contributes to and embraces the WIDA™ research base, the guiding principles, values, and the asset-based “can-do” philosophy of English learner education.

As a member state, Minnesota has adopted the WIDA English language development (ELD) standards and the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) as the annual state English language proficiency assessment. [ACCESS for ELLs 2.0](#) has a companion English language proficiency “[screener](#).” For more information about the WIDA Consortium, visit the [WIDA website](#). To gain login credentials, contact your district’s assessment coordinator (DAC).

The five ELD standards reflect the social and academic language expectations of ELs in grades pre-K through 12. Each ELD standard addresses a specific context for language acquisition but should not be confused with academic content standards. The emphasis is on using the features of academic language to provide content-based ESL instruction and support that ensures language growth in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The standards were adopted into rule in Minnesota on January 3, 2012.

Figure 1. English Language Development (ELD) Standards

ELP Standards	Standard Title	Abbreviated Title
ELD Standard 1	English language learners communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting	Social and Instructional language
ELD Standard 2	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts	The language of Language Arts
ELD Standard 3	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics	The language of Mathematics
ELD Standard 4	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Science	The language of Science
ELD Standard 5	English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies	The language of Social Studies

Source: WIDA™ 2012 Amplification of the English language development standards, K-12, page 3

WIDA™ Resources

Essential Actions: [A Handbook for Implementing WIDA’s Framework for English Language Development Standards](#). The purpose of this handbook is to promote collaboration, mutual understanding, and use of language development standards among all educators who work with English learners.

[WIDA's CAN DO Descriptors](#) are commonly used by EL teachers in coaching general education teachers about differentiated instruction for ELs.

[WIDA's CAN DO Philosophy](#) embraces inclusion and equity and focuses attention on expanding students' academic language by building on the inherent resources of English learners and accentuating the positive efforts of educators.

[WIDA's Guiding Principles of Language Development](#) were developed by WIDA staff and the WIDA standards expert panel, a group of researchers and practitioners in the field of academic language from across the U.S. As part of the WIDA consortium, Minnesota believes in and adheres to principles described in the following links:

[Downloadable Complete Reference List for the WIDA Principles](#)

[Academic Language Development Webinars](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 1 Academic Language](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 2 ELD Standards Framework](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 3 Language of Math](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 4 Language of Science](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 5 Language of Language Arts](#)

[Academic Language Series: Part 6 Language of Social Studies](#)

EL and Content Teacher Collaboration

To provide comprehensive and coherent instruction for English learners, it is important that EL and content teachers share with each other their instructional language and content objectives throughout the program. Regular communication about the curriculum and the language supports in place will provide for a broader support for English learners.

English learners are everyone's students. If the MEP has not hired an ESL-licensed teacher, it must determine how it will provide language instruction to ELs. One way programs do this is by hiring bilingual staff to provide interpretation support during instruction. Additionally, training all instructional staff on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model of instruction is another way to support ELs. Visit the [Center for Applied Linguistics website](#) for resources related to SIOP.

Additional Considerations when Serving English Learners

- **Funding for EL services:** State and Federal Title III funds may be available in the local district. Summer programming is considered supplementary, allowable use of these funds. Consider involvement in future budgeting conversations with the district when planning for summer programming.
- **Integration/Coordination of programming:** Consider how EL services could be provided by Targeted Services program staff.
- **Options for Screening:** While a state-approved WIDA assessment must be used, there are several options for screening: 1) WIDA Screener Online, 2) WIDA Screener Paper (recommended for new test

administrators), 3) Kindergarten W-APT, and 4) WIDA MODEL. The WIDA Screener Online and the W-APT are free. The WIDA Paper is provided for a relatively small fee for printing. The WIDA MODEL is also available for a fee. Assessment expenses should be paid for by the district where the student is enrolled.

- **Parent, Family and Community Engagement:** The MEP is required to have at least two family engagement activities. The MEP must communicate with families about these events (and other information pertinent to the families and their children’s academic progress) in a language and format accessible to them. To make the format accessible, the MEP may translate all information into the languages of its families. However, if a parent is not literate in his or her home language, a translated note will not be accessible. Consider hiring a bilingual liaison who could make phone calls to the parents to announce the events. Additionally, consider how parents new to country may not understand the American school system. Make sure that families know the importance of communication with the school about their children and their rights to provide input on their children’s education. Train families on differences in styles of discipline, how to support their children’s education in the home, and direct them to local resources such as English language and literacy training, legal and medical supports.
- **Training for the Screener:** The screener must be provided by a staff member who has received the WIDA screener training. Online training is available by logging into the [WIDA website](#) and scrolling down to “Screener Test Materials and Training”. Contact the district’s assessment coordinator (DAC) to gain access to the WIDA website.

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