

Benton County Schools



English Language Learners' Plan

Handbook

Benton County School District English Language Learners' Plan 2023-2024

Benton County School District Mission Statement

The mission of the Benton County School District is Rising to Excellence

Introduction

The Benton County School District (BCSD) consists of Ashland Elementary School, Ashland Middle/High School, and Hickory Flat Attendance Center.

I. Progression of Students through the English Language Learner (EL) Program

- Home Language Survey – included in each school’s registration packet.
- Initial assessment of language proficiency using the State English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)
- Parent Notification
- Place students in the English Learner (EL) program
- Assess students each spring using the ELPT
- Exit Students who score 4-5 overall, as well as reading and writing
- Monitor students for 4 years.

II. Identification of Potential ELs

Under Federal Law, schools must identify all EL students and screen, eligible students, for language assistance. According to Presidential Executive Order 13166, “Entities receiving assistance from the federal government must take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information those entities provide.”

Registration of potential EL students will require the following; however, they will be immediately enrolled, and the district will support students in securing and producing documentation as soon as possible:

- Proof of residency
- Proof of required vaccination – May be enrolled and then obtain the required immunizations.

- Proof of age as required by MS Code 37-15-9
- An MSIS number will be assigned to the student if he/she does not have one assigned from another school district.
- The Home Language Survey is included in each school’s registration packet and is used to identify potential EL students. The Home Language Survey is filed in the permanent record.

The Home Language Survey shall include the following questions:

1. What is/was the first language your child learned to speak?
2. Does the student speak a language other than English?
3. What language does your child speak most often?
4. What language(s) are spoken in your home?
5. Has the student attended any U.S. school in any three years of his/her lifetime?

At all schools, the school counselors and/or secretaries are responsible for distributing and collecting this information and notifying the EL Coordinator of potential EL student enrollment. If language is a barrier during the enrollment process, the interpreter is included to help with the enrollment process.

If the Home Language Survey indicates that a student speaks a language other than English in the home the student will be assessed using the ELPT. The EL Coordinator, who receives training annually, is responsible for testing potential students with the placement test.

Determination of eligibility is made based on the placement test results as outlined below:

| Grade Range | Not Proficient | Approaching Proficient | Proficient |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|------------|
| K-1 | 1-21 (NP) | 22-30 (AP) | 31-36 (P) |
| 2-3 | 1-21 (NP) | 22-32 (AP) | 33-41 (P) |
| 4-5 | 1-17 (NP) | 18-27 (AP) | 28-41 (P) |
| 6-8 | 1-17 (NP) | 18-27 (AP) | 28-41 (P) |
| 9-12 | 1-18 (NP) | 19-29 (AP) | 30-41 (P) |

Students whose overall scores are “NP” or “AP” are classified as LEP and are eligible for language assistance services. Students whose overall scores are “P” are classified as proficient and are ineligible for language assistance services.

If a student is identified as EL, the parents will be notified by letter within 30 calendar days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year. Identified students who enroll once the school year is underway will be tested within 10 school calendar days and parents will be notified within two weeks of enrollment. Parent Notices, an online site for translating school documents, will be used to translate the Home Language Survey into the parents’ native language. Parent Notices will also be used to generate notification letters in the parents’ native language. Parents will also receive a copy of the EL Policy

and Procedures available in their home language, and the Site Coordinator will schedule a parent meeting to discuss a plan of instruction.

Once notified, the parents will be given the opportunity to decline EL services by signing a waiver. The parent will be given the opportunity to deny services, stop services at any time, or review additional options. Schools within the district offer after-school tutoring programs throughout the year (if available).

All students who are placed in the EL program are identified in the MSIS system. The EL Coordinator keeps a record of all students, their current level of proficiency, and the number of years monitored or served. Students' test scores, Language Service Plans, evidence of parent communication, and additional paperwork will be kept on file in the Site Coordinator's office located at the elementary school. ELPT test scores will also be kept in the student's cumulative file.

The list of EL students is constantly changing as new students arrive, students move out of the district, or level or monitor status changes. The Site Coordinator monitors this information and updates the EL Coordinator who marks MSIS appropriately. All data is submitted in accordance with MDE requirements upon request. Information that is collected is submitted through means of ELPT assessments, MSIS, Fiscal/Project Management Packages, budget reports, and other required surveys and/or reports.

ELPT and state test scores are maintained in the student's cumulative file and will be transferred by office staff should the student leave the district.

III. Exiting ELS

All EL students will be assessed annually in the spring using the ELPT, in addition to other state-mandated assessments. In order to be exited from the EL program, a student must have an Overall status of 4-5, Reading 4-5, and Writing 4-5 on the ELPT assessment.

These scores will be considered when determining the eligibility of exiting a student from EL services. The SET or EL Committee will be comprised of an EL interventionist, a classroom teacher, a school administrator, a parent representative, and a translator if needed.

A student identified as fluent by the ELPT who also shows success in the major academic areas will be exited from the EL program and placed on monitoring status. Monitoring will continue for the next four years.

During the four-year monitoring period, the student

- is no longer considered LEP or EL.
- will no longer receive accommodations or modifications.
- will NOT be administered the ELPT.
- if not successful during the four-year period, may again be offered support services based on student needs.

During the monitoring phase, the Site Coordinator works closely with the classroom teachers to follow the progress of the monitored students.

If at any time during the monitoring phase, the student falls behind in classroom work and/or English language skills, the student will continue in the EL program or be referred for tutoring in an after-school program (if available). If an exited EL is not progressing academically as expected and monitoring suggests a persistent language need, the district must re-test using the LAS Links Place Test to see if the student needs to be offered additional language assistance services. In no case should re-testing of an exited student ELP be prohibited. If the student re-enters EL services, however, the ELA is required to document the reasons why, as well as obtain the parent's consent prior to re-entry.

IV. Evaluation/Program Review and Improvement

The effectiveness of the EL program is evaluated using the ELPT assessment, progress reports, end-of-the-year report cards, state-mandated test data, state accountability, and AYP reports. Student assessment data will be considered when modifying a student's LSP.

BCSD adheres to all accountability guidelines set forth by the MS Department of Education (MDE). All scores from state and/or standardized tests are reviewed by the administration and discussed with certified staff.

Once a plan is developed for the EL program, it is forwarded to administrators for review. Once the plan has been approved by the School Board, it is signed by school administrators and sent to the MDE for approval.

If program improvement is needed, administrators and teachers involved in the EL program will meet to devise a plan. The gathering of sources and information will be evaluated. Staff will be interviewed and parent surveys and/or complaints will be reviewed. Program improvement may also include, but is not limited to, the review of resources and materials used, teaching programs/methods, classroom accommodations/modifications, and staff development. The EL Coordinator attends ELPT training sessions each year. The Site Coordinator attends EL training. She also talks with other districts to find out what is working well for their school in regard to ELs.

V. EL Instructional Programs

The BCSD EL Program uses a pull-out instructional service model.

Students at the schools receive their primary instruction in the regular classroom by the regular classroom teacher. Students are pulled out for further language instruction by the Site Coordinator.

Language is taught through content-based instruction in the BCSD.

VI. EL Program Educational Goals

The mission of the English Learner (EL) Program is to provide a learning environment that nurtures the personal development of EL students by learning a language that is not native to them. EL students are challenged to learn communication skills in order for them to achieve academically, become involved socially, and participate within the mainstream learning environment of their peers. EL students are provided opportunities that include instruction in speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

EL students in the BCSD participate in an environment that is developmentally appropriate, student-centered, and focused on research-based learning. Along with EL classes and pull-out programs, students participate in age-appropriate mainstream classrooms where they can interact with their English-speaking peers and participate in various cultural experiences. Within the mainstream classroom, students are met with challenging material that is presented through both interesting and oftentimes interactive methods.

VII. Assistance for ELs in Academic Instruction

The BCSD begins EL instruction in an age-appropriate class. This class allows participation in a challenging curriculum with access to English-speaking peers. EL instruction in the BCSD exercises a partnership between Site Coordinators, mainstream teachers, and parents. Mainstream teachers and Site Coordinators share information regarding teaching units and student progress on a regular basis. Primarily, EL students receive most of their instruction in the regular classroom. However, they may also be pulled out for EL class or content intervention with the Site Coordinator for EL tutoring/content interventions.

Students currently in EL program will be enlisted in the pull-out program and will receive instruction as determined by the LAS Link scores and scheduling. All newcomers will need approximately 30 minutes a day, 3-5 days a week of pull-out instruction.

The EL program designs instruction to meet various learning styles and skill levels. It also provides interactive learning opportunities and higher-order thinking skills that meet the individual needs of students. The primary goal of the EL program is to provide students with the English skills necessary to function successfully in the academic program, develop social skills, and become productive citizens in the community. The ultimate goal of the BCSD EL program is to assist our students with demonstrating English Proficiency on the English Language Proficiency Test within 5 years.

The BCSD utilizes the goals/standards set forth by the EL Standards Framework (shown below) to help students develop competencies in English.

Strand 1. ELs are able to listen, speak, read, and write in English for social, intercultural, and instructional communication.

Strand 2. ELs are able to listen, speak, read, and write in English for language arts, social studies, and history.

Strand 3. ELs are able to listen, speak, read, and write in English for mathematics, science, and technical subjects.

Strand 4. ELs are able to begin to develop foundational skills for reading and writing (only applicable for K-3rd grade).

VIII. Program Models

Methods and services to teach ELs include sheltered instruction, pull-out, content-based English as a second language, and ESL program teaching strategies.

At the elementary school, students are involved in a pull-out method of service delivery. The EL classroom and the regular classroom are both utilized for EL purposes. At middle and high school, a class is designated each year for ELs.

The majority of an EL's learning will be in the mainstream classroom. Teachers will use sheltered instruction methods and provide accommodations appropriate for ELs so they can understand the academic material being presented. The EL Coordinator will work with teachers to make sure accommodations are used in the classroom.

ELs are placed with a "buddy" when available. Preferably this will be a student who speaks both English and the ELs native language and can assist them in the classroom. This "buddy" system has proved beneficial in helping newcomers adjust to an English-speaking environment. Newcomers are supplied with bilingual materials including books and picture cards for communicating basic survival needs.

IX. Resources, Instructional Staffing, Equipment, and Materials

The district provides Site Coordinators at each school. All work closely with the students based on individual student needs. In addition, all classroom teachers are qualified or highly qualified in the subject matter they teach.

The Site Coordinators for the BCSD attend conferences and/or workshops annually. The Site Coordinator is trained in the administration of the ELPT.

Site Coordinators communicate with the parents, teachers, and/or students at the schools. An interpreter is available who will help with communication when necessary. She is available to all schools in the district, and she will also translate documents, such as letters to parents.

Records of all parent conferences are kept, as well as sign-in sheets from parent meetings at special events, such as Open House. Also, the Federal Programs Director and EL Coordinator attended the webinar to begin using Parent Notices for any required translated documents. Parents receive translated information throughout the year from EL classes and/or mainstream classes and are encouraged and offered suggestions on how to help EL students within the home so they can become as successful as possible.

The student evaluation team (SET) consists of the Site Coordinator, an administrator, a parent, and a mainstream teacher, who meet throughout the year to discuss progress, classroom work, and the needs of the EL students. The Site Coordinator also meets with parents when entering a student into the program to discuss the Language Service Plan (LSP) or answer any questions. At the beginning of the school year, the SET meets to discuss any student who may be eligible to exit the EL program.

Materials and resources, both hard copy and online, are provided to meet EL needs. The district uses a variety of computer-based programs, reading materials, and bilingual materials. Students have Chromebooks available for student use in the EL classroom. Students use Chromebooks for Duolingo, Google Documents, Google Translate, and other computer-based enrichments. Students also have access to Chromebooks for each student in the general classroom.

Students in middle school and high school each have their own school-issued Chromebook that goes from class to class as well as home for use on classroom homework, assignments, research, video projects, typing reports, Google Translate, testing and other enrichment activities.

All new EL curriculum materials and program purchases are reviewed by the Federal Programs Director and the Site Coordinator to ensure that the purchases support research-based initiatives and will aid the EL students in developing English as outlined by the state. Resources are purchased based on the need and availability of funds. Both district and federal funds have been used to purchase EL supplies and materials.

X. Procedures and Criteria for Determining When a Student No Longer Needs EL Services

Students in the EL program will be tested annually each spring using the state-mandated ELPT. Scores from the ELPT and subject area testing will be reviewed to determine a student's progress.

Students in the four-year monitor phase of the EL program will be followed closely. The Site Coordinator and mainstream teachers work together to follow each student's progress throughout the school year. The Site Coordinator and assistants will review students' grades every nine weeks, as well as classroom progress. Student report cards and progress notes will also be reviewed by EL staff. If a monitored student's success begins to decline, the EL SET will decide whether a student should return to EL services.

XI. EL Access to Various District Programs

The district ensures that administrators, faculty, and staff are kept abreast of federal regulations and guidelines for EL students. In the event assessments are needed to determine EL students' eligibility for special programs, assessments will be obtained. Methods used to notify parents and students of available services consider language barriers. EL students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.

Students at the elementary school attend rotations which include a library, physical education, art, and STEM. They are also provided cultural/social experiences through participation in special events such as Veterans Day, Black History Month, classroom holiday celebrations, and field trips. The BCSD also has EL students who participate in gifted and special education programs

Students at middle and high schools also have the opportunity to participate in technologically geared classes and various extracurricular activities such as sports, band, and musicals.

Participation in some programs can be selected by the EL student; however, some programs may require referral. If a student participates in a program or attends a field trip or special activity, the parents are notified. Correspondence to parents is made available through translated materials either by Parent Notices, Google Translate, or bilingual staff.

XII. Educational Services to ELs and Education Personnel in Private Schools

Benton County Schools has no private schools participating within the district.