



CARMELLA SCOTT
FEDERAL PROGRAMS DIRECTOR | 522 PINCKNEYVILLE ROAD,
WOODVILLE, MS 39669

Wilkinson County School District Leadership Team

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Wilkinson County High School	Dr. Karen Williams , Principal
	Hayes Harris, Asst.Principal
Martin Luther King CTE (Vocational)	Patricia Gaines, CTE Director

Introduction

Wilkinson County School District is composed of two schools and a career and technical center with an approximate enrollment of 620 students. At the close of the 2024-2025 school year, the Wilkinson County School District had an approximate enrollment of 7 actively served English Learner students enrolled in the program. Spanish is the primary language spoken in the households of our EL students.

Definition of English Learners (EL)

- Ages 3-21 and is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school;
- who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
- who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
- who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual
 - *the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments;
 - *the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - *the opportunity to participate fully in society.

These EL students come from a variety of environments. Their skill levels are also at many different levels. Some are newly arriving immigrant children and youth with adequate schooling, newly arriving immigrant children and youth with limited schooling, and some are long-term ELs

Enrolling EL Students

Welcoming ELs into a school community requires empathy and understanding of the unique

challenges faced by these students and families. It also necessitates an understanding of the benefits of creating environments that are inclusive, informing, welcoming, and conducive to full participation and academic success for all students. Wilkinson County School District will enroll all students regardless of their or their parents' or guardians' actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status. When enrolling students, Wilkinson County School District will not request information from students or their parents or guardians in order to deny access to public schools on the basis of race, color, or national origin. For example, Wilkinson County School District may require proof of residency, inquiring into students' citizenship or immigration status, or that of their parents or guardians would not be relevant to establishing residency. Similarly, Wilkinson County School District may require students or their parents to provide proof of age. We may not bar a student from enrolling because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records that indicate a foreign birth place. Further, if Wilkinson County School District requests a student's social security number, it must: 1) inform the family that providing it is voluntary and refusal will not bar the child from enrolling in or attending school, and 2) explain for what purpose the number will be used. Wilkinson County School District may not require families to provide a social security number to enroll in or attend school.

Process for Identifying Potential ELs

Home Language Survey (HLS)

A HLS is included in the online enrollment packet for all new entering students. If the HLS indicates that a language other than English is used by the student or an individual in the home, then further assessment must be conducted to determine the student's English-language proficiency level. The HLS becomes part of the student's cumulative record and must be available for future reference. It is recommended by the U.S. Department of Education to include these questions to comply with federal law:

- Is a language other than English spoken at home?
- Is your child's first language a language other than English?
- What language did your child learn when he/she first began to speak?
- What language does your child most frequently speak at home?

Process for Assessing ELs

ELPA21 – English Language Proficiency Assessment

This assessment will determine the English-language proficiency level. This assessment will be given within the first 30 days of enrolling at the beginning of the school year. Students who

register after the beginning of the school year will be assessed within ten days of enrollment. Those administering and scoring the placement test must be certified teachers and receive some level of training. The LEA test security plan must describe who will administer and score the assessments, and what training is required to ensure valid and reliable results. The EL Coordinator or designee will travel to each campus to administer the ELPA21 screener. A copy of the placement test must be placed in the student's cumulative record.

Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS)

When a student is identified as an EL, the MSIS secretary will mark the student as an EL in the district data package. This will then transfer into MSIS which will then report to the MDE. This information will be checked monthly in MSIS and updated.

Parent and Family Notification/Process for Enrolling ELs into the EL program:

1. Parents/ guardians will be notified, by a letter, that their child will be enrolled in the EL program. The parent is not required to respond to the notification in order for the student to participate; however, parents do have the right to have their child removed immediately from a program upon their request. Documents will be provided to the parents in their native language or an interpreter will be used. Nevertheless, under Civil Rights policy, the district is still obligated to provide appropriate means to ensure that the student's English language and academic needs are met.
2. Students who have been ruled eligible and placed in the EL program will fully participate in all regular education activities. Students will participate in regular and state assessments.
3. A Language Service Plan (LSP) will be developed to meet the needs of the student. The Student Evaluation Team (SET) will review classroom and assessment accommodations and check the ones that will best benefit the student.
The LSP will contain the following information:
 - *Student's demographic information
 - *Date of first enrollment in a U.S. school
 - *Yearly English Language Proficiency Test scores
 - *Classroom accommodations
 - *State testing accommodations
 - *Signatures of SET members
4. The goal for the EL student is to attain fluency in English, master the state's academic content standards and pass any other state required assessments.

English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)

All ELs enrolled in schools served by the State must be assessed annually using the State's English language proficiency assessment. The ELPA21 Assessment is a secure, large-scale,

English proficiency assessment administered to kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as ELs. This assessment is administered annually in the spring to monitor each EL's progress in acquiring academic English. It is the LEA's obligation to assess 100 percent of ELs using the annual ELPT.

English Language Proficiency Testing Basics

As mandated by ESEA, the students are tested in four domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading and writing. The Listening domain assesses the student's response to a variety of audio passages. The Speaking domain assesses the student's production of grammar and vocabulary as used in social and academic language. The Reading domain assesses the student's reading comprehension based on answers to multiple-choice questions about passages, tables, charts, and illustrations. The Writing domain assesses the student's ability to produce grade-level-appropriate words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Accommodations on State Academic Assessments

Reasonable accommodations must be provided on assessments administered to ELs. In the Mississippi Accommodation Manual, accommodations are available for students who have been identified as ELs.

Exiting Students from EL status

1. EL students will be monitored at each grading period through grades, assessments, teacher/school feedback and classroom observations. This information will be reviewed and if a student is not progressing, a detailed plan will be developed to better assist the student.
2. EL students will participate in the state mandated ELPA21 and MAAP assessments each year. EL High school students will be required to pass the MAAP English II, Algebra I, and Biology I assessments in order to graduate high school. Eleventh grade EL students will be required to take the ACT.

3. EL students may exit the program when they have mastered the following:

- ELPT assessment
- *Overall proficiency level 4 or 5, and
- *Reading proficiency level 4 or 5, and
- *Writing proficiency level 4 or 5.

No other criteria can be used to exit an EL student or retain them in services.

Process for Monitoring EL Students who have exited the program

An EL student must be monitored for four years once they have met the criteria to exit the program. Once they have exited the program they will no longer receive classroom or assessment accommodations. During this monitored status, the district must monitor and document the student's academic progress every 9 weeks. If the student is not progressing, the district will re-test the student to see if the student needs additional language services offered.

Description of services and instructional supports provided to ELs, including how ELs are given access to challenging state standards

1. Tutorial services will be offered
2. Native language support, when applicable
3. Use of multiple instructional strategies (peer tutoring, process writing, or technology)
4. Adjusting teaching style
5. Scaffolding

Placement for Newly Arrived Immigrant Children and Youth who are Secondary English Learners

When a student enrolls in U.S. schools for the first time at the secondary level, careful consideration must be given to the student's course schedule to ensure the student has access to a high school diploma. School districts must place students in academic courses sequentially to ensure ELs have access to the foundational skills needed to be successful in high school and ensure that they graduate from high school ready for college and career. Students must be given an opportunity to take all courses needed for graduation. Students must take the required assessments at the time they are enrolled in the corresponding courses, and they may not skip courses to avoid state assessments. For example, English I, II, III, and IV must be offered, scheduled and taught in sequential order. While courses cannot be scheduled or taken out of sequence, concurrent enrollment is acceptable in situations where a student failed a course and needs to simultaneously enroll in two courses to graduate on time. For example, if a student fails English III, they can take English III and English IV their senior year to graduate on time. Students might be enrolled concurrently in English as a Second Language as an elective to receive additional support while taking English I–IV.

Grading and Retention of English Language Learners

As students are working to learn English during the initial stages of language acquisition, it is a violation of their Civil Rights to retain them due to limited language proficiency. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), schools must ensure that EL students are placed appropriately and can

participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. Districts are required to take steps to ensure that students are not retained solely because they are still in the early stages of learning English. Language support and accommodations must be shared with the families of EL students to ensure that they have an understanding of true academic performance in English language proficiency.

ELPA21 recognizes five proficiency levels:

- Emerging – Level 1 or 2 in all non-exempt domains
- Progressing – at least one domain below Level 4 and at least one domain above Level 2
- Proficient – Level 4 or 5 in all non-exempt domains

No failing grades may be given to ELs whose English proficiency is developing from Level 1 through Level 3. An EL cannot be penalized for his/her lack of English.

Wilkinson County School District will follow the following modified grading scale:

Kindergarten – 8th Grade:

1. Levels 1- 3(Emerging through Progressing)

a. 65 -100% Passing (with necessary accommodations and modifications)

2. Levels 4-5 (Proficient and Above Proficient)

a. Common criteria for assigning grade (with necessary accommodations and modifications)

9th Grade – 12th Grade:

1. Levels 1-3 (Emerging through Progressing)

a. 65 -100% passing (with necessary accommodations and modifications)

2. Level 4-5 (Proficient and Above Proficient)

a. Common criteria for assigning grades (with necessary accommodations and modifications)

A Carnegie unit credit should be awarded to students in levels 1-3 based on classroom modifications and accommodations for student success.

Legally, the LEA is required to accommodate the EL in a way that allows the student to benefit from the educational experience. The student cannot be penalized for his/her lack of the English language. A valid interpretation would mean that a student should never be given the grade of “F” when the student’s lack of success can be attributed to limited English proficiency. Experts in the field say that the average amount of time for attaining

oral fluency is 1 to 2 years. However, English skills in reading and writing take an average of 5 to 7 years; during this time the student may still be limited English proficient (LEP).

The experts in the field of English as a Second Language suggest that classroom teachers hold students accountable for material that is appropriate for their English language levels and educational background. Modifications of instructional methods and assessments are recommended for grade-level content material. (Possibilities include shorter tests, read aloud, oral responses, and pictorial responses, etc.) Retention is generally not recommended for ELs. It is crucial that a careful evaluation is made to be sure that lack of English language skills is not mistaken for poor achievement. Though the decision to promote or retain must be made on a case-by-case basis, any decision to retain an EL must be accompanied by extensive documentation demonstrating that appropriate accommodations and modifications were employed throughout the year to assure compliance with Federal requirements (May 25, 1970 Memorandum).

Mississippi EL Standards

Mississippi currently utilizes the TESOL Pre-K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards, and the State's ELPT is aligned to these standards. The frameworks for the standards may be accessed at

https://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_prek-12elpstandards_framework_318.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Staffing and Supporting an English Learner Program

Recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified educators is essential to ensuring that any EL program model is effective. The Wilkinson County School District will make every effort to train core-content teachers, who meet requirements in their field, to specifically support EL students. These teachers should meet state requirements and have mastered the skills necessary to effectively teach..

The Wilkinson County School District will make every effort to hire teachers qualified and certified to teach ELs, or support unqualified staff as they work toward obtaining the qualifications within a reasonable period of time. If Wilkinson County School District cannot hire an adequate number of qualified EL trained teachers, we will ensure that current teachers and assistants receive the necessary training, either through Mississippi Department of Education-provided professional development or through training provided through the district. Even when teachers already hold an ESL license, it is expected that the district provide teachers and paraprofessionals with ongoing PD designed to improve effectiveness. All staff, including bilingual paraprofessionals and assistants, are required to speak English proficiently. Paraprofessionals who work with ELs also must receive appropriate PD to build effectiveness.

Ensuring Meaningful Communication With Limited English Proficient Parents

The Wilkinson County School District has a legal obligation to communicate meaningfully with Limited English Proficient parents and families and to adequately notify them of information about any program, service or activity called to the attention of non-LEP parents. Successful communication provides LEP parents, guardians, and families with the school-related information they need to make informed decisions about, and be helpful participants in, their children's education. This may include but not be limited to information about language assistance programs, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, requests for parent or guardian permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, gifted programs, and magnet and charter schools.

The Wilkinson County School District will develop and implement an uncomplicated process for determining (1) if parents and guardians have limited English proficiency, (2) what their primary language is, and (3) what their language needs are. Wilkinson County School District will use a student registration form, the HLS, to inquire about whether a parent or guardian requires oral and/or written communication in a language other than English. The district and its schools must translate the HLS into languages that are common in the school and surrounding community. Schools must take parents at their word about their communication needs if they request language assistance. Schools must also understand that parents or guardians may not be proficient in English, even if their child is.

Wilkinson County School District will provide language assistance to LEP parents effectively with appropriate, competent staff or appropriate and relevant outside resources. To provide these services, we may survey or canvas staff to see if they are trained and qualified to provide effective language assistance or obtain qualified interpreters and translators if staff is unqualified or if additional staffing support is needed.

Tool for Translating Federally Mandated Documents

In Mississippi, one tool for providing translated notices to families is the online system TransACT. All Mississippi public school staff with email addresses can access the system, which provides hundreds of translated, ESSA-aligned forms and notifications. TransACT can be accessed at www.transact.com.

Additionally, Title I of ESEA, as amended by ESSA now requires education agencies to conduct effective outreach to parents, guardians, and families of ELs. This requirement includes outreach for regular meetings attended by non-EL families.

Building strong relationships between families and schools or districts typically occurs over time, and these relationships can be established and nurtured in numerous ways, which go

well beyond the basic requirements of translation and interpreter services. It is essential that school and district leaders understand the cultures of LEP families and integrate the culture of LEP families into school life. Schools and LEAs also should foster relationships by inviting families to volunteer in the school and encouraging families to help children integrate their cultural and linguistic traditions into school assignments and other curricular and extracurricular activities.

English Learners and Access to Other Program Services

Services for ELs must represent a continuum of available programs and students must not be denied access to programs due to language proficiency. The EL students who meet criteria may be eligible for a variety of other specialized program services, including gifted education, advanced placement, dual credit, and other advanced courses; MTSS, special education services, migrant and immigrant programs, and services for homeless students.

Gifted Education

EL students may possess extraordinary learning or performance abilities that have nothing to do with their language proficiency. Procedures used for identifying students who are gifted must be as bias-free and culturally equitable as possible, while also being consistent with the requirements set for other gifted students. These procedures must be designed to highlight student strengths and abilities, regardless of native language or dominant language use. Generally, assessments used in identification must be administered in the language that gives the individual student the greatest opportunity for demonstrating extraordinary capability. Assessment of a student's linguistic ability must be done in the language in which the student is most comfortable.

Students who are identified as gifted must still receive EL services until they qualify for exiting EL status. The time spent in the development of English proficiency must not take precedence over appropriate instruction and learning in the student's areas of strength and talent. For example, a mathematically gifted, non-English proficient student must receive advanced and accelerated mathematics instruction and opportunities to perform at optimal levels. The language of instruction must serve the optimal development of the student's mathematics ability. The student must spend as much quality time in high-level mathematics learning and production as would a highly English proficient, mathematically gifted student.

Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, and Other Advanced Courses

In addition to gifted education, EL students also must be provided with access to advanced placement, dual credit, and other advanced courses. The ELs must receive language supports to assist them in accessing academic content, just as they would if they were in other less accelerated academic courses.

Guidelines for EL Students with Disabilities

The IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) address the rights of students with disabilities in school and other educational settings. If an EL is suspected of having one or more disabilities, the Wilkinson County School District must evaluate the EL promptly to determine if the EL has a disability or disabilities and whether the EL needs disability-related services. Disability evaluations may not be delayed because of a student's limited English language proficiency or the student's participation in an EL program. Also, a student's English language proficiency cannot be the basis for identifying a student for special education.

It is important for educators to accurately assess whether ELs are eligible for special education services. Appropriate disability identification processes that evaluate the student's disability-related educational needs and not the student's English language skills will help school personnel to accurately identify students in need of disability-related services. In addition, districts must ensure that a student's special education evaluation is provided and administered in the student's dominant language or another mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information about what the student knows and can do unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. Assessing whether a student has a disability in his or her native language or another mode of communication can help educators determine whether a need stems from a lack of English language proficiency or a student's disability-related needs.

When an EL student is determined to have a disability, the student's EL and disability-related educational needs must both be met. For EL students, in addition to the required IEP team participants under IDEA, it is essential that the IEP team include participants who know the student's language needs. It is also important that the IEP team include professionals with training, and preferably expertise, in second language acquisition. There are steps that must be taken to help prevent over-identification of ELs in special education. When a student is having difficulty mastering specific skills, it is important for the teacher to accommodate the instructional strategies and pace of instruction for the student. If the student continues to have difficulty after consistent language accommodations and Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, the student must be referred to the Student Evaluation Team (SET) along with the TST. The EL professional must be a member of the TST.

A number of factors must be considered when deciding whether a student must be referred for special education testing. These include the following:

- Entry date in the United States
- Years of consistent schooling
- Educational history, including years in U.S. schools and consistency of education
- Prior evaluation results
- Physical conditions that might account for difficulties, including need for glasses or hearing aids
- School attendance

- Input from parents, guardians, and families

After this information is reviewed, one of two things may happen:

1. The TST may recommend additional interventions and accommodations for the classroom.
2. The SET team can then make a referral for special education testing to determine if the student has a specific disability. Once a referral is made, testing is completed to determine if the student qualifies as a student with a disability under IDEA.

It is important to note that the parent, guardian, or the TST team may request a comprehensive assessment be completed at any time, which would then require a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) meeting within ten days to determine whether a comprehensive evaluation must be completed at this time.

Specific procedures for special education assessment are provided in the Mississippi Policies and Procedures Regarding Children with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004 (2009). As noted earlier, proficiency assessment in both English and the child's first language can identify the dominant language for further evaluation and assessment if needed. Nonverbal tests are another alternative.

All students who qualify for services under IDEA, regardless of the type or degree of disability, share certain rights and needs, including:

- The right to a free and appropriate public education
- The right to an IEP specifying the student's unique needs along with the special education and related services the student is to receive
- The need to have cognitive, linguistic, academic, and social/emotional characteristics

Migrant Education Program

An EL is eligible to receive migrant education program (MEP) services if they meet the definition of “migratory child” and if the basis for their eligibility is properly recorded on a certificate of eligibility (COE) or on another written or electronic form. All school districts should have a copy of the migrant survey in their registration packet. Any survey indicating potential migrant status should be provided to the Mississippi Migrant Education Service Center. The term “migratory child” is defined in section 1309(2) of the statute and section 200.81(d) of the regulations. Determining whether a child meets this definition is often difficult and depends on a recruiter’s assessment of information presented by a parent or other family member, guardian, or another individual responsible for the child.

According to sections 1115(b)(1)(A) (incorporated into the MEP program by virtue of sections 1304(c)(2)) and 1309(2) of the statute and §§ 200.81(e) and 200.103(a) of the regulations, a child is a “migratory child” and is eligible for MEP services if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The child is not older than 21 years of age; and
2. The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under State law or is below the age of compulsory school attendance; and
3. The child is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or the child has a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and
4. The child moved within the preceding 36 months to seek or obtain qualifying work, or to accompany or join the migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher identified in paragraph 3, above, to obtain qualifying work; and
 - a. With regard to the move identified in paragraph 4, above, the child: has moved from one school district to another; or
 - b. In a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
 - c. Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in or to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian who engages in a fishing activity. (This provision currently applies only to Alaska.)

The general purpose of the MEP is to ensure that children of migrant workers have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool, provided to other children. To achieve this purpose, the MEP helps state and local education agencies remove barriers to the school enrollment, attendance, and achievement of migrant children.

Although many migrant families represent language minorities, it is important to remember that many do not.

Immigrant Education Program

Status as an immigrant often overlaps with EL status among students. However, educators must be aware that not all immigrant students are ELs. Some immigrant students, for example, might come from English-speaking countries or from countries where English is one of several primary languages. Many immigrants also come to the United States already English proficient, even if they come from countries where English is not widely spoken.

For purposes of education, immigrant children and youth include those individuals who:

- Are aged 3 through 21
- Were not born in the U.S., “State” means the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Section 3127 of ESEA). Children born to U.S. citizens abroad (e.g., children born on a military base overseas) may be considered immigrants if they meet all the criteria in the definition of immigrant; and
- Have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than three full academic years. A full academic year is ten months of school attendance, kindergarten through 12th grade. If a student has been in different schools in different school districts and even in different states, the number of months that the student has been in school in any one or more states must not add up to a total of more than three full academic years.

Wilkinson County School District will identify immigrant students by adding a question to the Home Language Survey that is filled out by all new students during enrollment. The form will ask about the number of years the child has attended school in the United States. There are some different needs that immigrants might have. One of the most significant needs is often English language instruction. Districts also may need to help immigrant students adjust to U.S. culture as well as to the culture of a new school and community. School staff may also need professional development in cultural proficiency to more effectively serve immigrant students.