

Smith County School District



English Learner Handbook

2026-2027

NOTE TO THE READER:

Due to the legal requirements of the district EL manuals, the majority of this document has been taken from the Mississippi English Learner Guidelines – Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports -

<https://mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OFP/Titles/Title%20III/resources/English-Learner-teacher-Guide.pdf>

Rather than cite each copied section, the District wishes to reference the document here.

PHILOSOPHY AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Smith County School District recognizes the need and the requirement to provide EL (English Learner) students with linguistic and academic instruction and support services to develop English language proficiency such that, over time, they progress through school at a rate commensurate with their native English-speaking peers. To ensure educational efforts are consistent district-wide; the following requirements will be met:

- Language minority children are entitled to attend school, regardless of their ability to produce a birth certificate, social security number, or immigration document. Enrollment in Smith County schools is dependent upon two kinds of information: proof of residency in the district and proof of the required vaccinations. Assistance will be provided for parents, if needed. However, regardless of the ability to produce these items students will be able to enroll.
- Language minority children will be placed in their age-appropriate class, but some exceptions may apply which could allow for not more than one year behind the age appropriate level, i.e., developmentally delayed, has never attended school, and is not “much more than 6 years old.”
- Language minority students will not be retained or fail solely due to limited English proficiency.

DEFINITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER, IMMIGRANT AND MIGRANT

English Learner (EL)

According to ESSA, an English Learner (EL) is defined as an individual:

- who is aged 3 through 21;
- who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school 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. (MDE English Learner Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports, pp. 33-34)

Immigrant

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 proficient in English, 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 3 full academic years. A full academic year is 10 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 3 full academic years.

Smith County School District will utilize the MDE recommended HLS which contains a question regarding the date of first enrollment in a school in the United States aiding the district in proper identification of immigrant status students.

Once a student has completed three full academic school years (MS public, private and homeschool, or any type of out of state school), she/he is no longer identified as Immigrant.

(For purposes of MSIS data: Academic school year is calculated by Mississippi school attendance calendar August through May; 10 months of education equals a full academic school year regardless of enrollment date minus summer school. Also, students may be immigrant students that are not EL students!)

Migrant

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 other written or electronic form. 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 other 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 in order to seek or obtain qualifying work, or to accompany or join the migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher identified in paragraph 3, above, in order to seek or obtain qualifying work; ***and***
5. With regard to the move identified in paragraph 4, above, the child:

- a. 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. (MDE English Learner Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports, pp. 33-34)

The Mississippi Migrant Education Service Center (MMESC) at Mississippi State University is the state-wide local operating agency for delivery of services to the children whose parents or guardians qualify as migrant agricultural and fishery workers.

Each school year, every LEA must provide a Family Survey to **every** student enrolling in the school district. **All** completed surveys must then be conveyed to MMESC for examination and verification. An MMESC recruiter will contact identified families.

The survey must be provided in English and a language understandable by the enrolling student's parent or guardian. Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic versions are available at the MMESC website in the documents section.

Migrant students, like all other students, must be treated no differently (during enrollment) than any other student. Immigration status of the child or parents is irrelevant, and immigration-related documentation may not be demanded. Lack of a social security number is irrelevant – the LEA must assign an identification number. Federal law prohibits all discrimination and requires appropriate actions to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students.

Students enrolling in Mississippi schools come from many environments. Their English skills and those of their other family members are highly variable. Some students may read, write, and speak English fluently and perform competently in school. Others may be orally proficient in both their home language and English for basic social communication but have difficulty with academic English. Still others may speak no English at all.

Likewise, the parents or guardians of EL students may vary in their English proficiency, English literacy, and literacy in the native language. The literacy level of a family in its native language can affect the rate at which an EL student acquires English. Language minority students in Mississippi are heterogeneous. They or their parents have come to Mississippi for many different reasons such as adoption, escaping war or civil unrest, to study at a university and/or to receive professional development, to work in agriculture and poultry processing plants, or to work for multinational companies.

PROCESS FOR ENROLLING ELS

Enrolling English Learners

Smith County School District will enroll students regardless of their or their parents' or guardians' actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status. The District will not request information, such as students citizenship or immigration status, that is not relevant to establishing residency in the district. The District requires birth certificates to provide proof of age, however, the District will not bar a student from enrolling because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records that indicate a foreign place of birth.

Identifying English Learners

Step 1- Home Language Survey

All Smith County students will have a Home Language Survey (HLS) completed during school enrollment/registration through the online SAMS system to ensure that all potential students have been identified. When new students arrive on campus to bring in proof of residency a paper copy of the Home Language Survey will be given to ALL new students as well. Copies of the HLS indicating the use of another language will be copied and given to the EL Coordinator within 3 days.

If an interpreter is needed during registration the school will use on-site resources or contact the district EL coordinator to assist in locating a translator. Every effort will be made to communicate in a manner that the parent will understand. Surveys that indicate the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home will be reviewed by the EL Coordinator to determine if further assessment must be conducted to determine the student's English language proficiency level. The HLS will be translated into languages that are common to our school district and surrounding community.

The Home Language Survey consists of questions designed to identify potential students who may need English acquisition assistance. The questions on the Smith County Home Language Survey are in compliance with federal law.

If any response on the HLS indicates the use of a language other than English 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 paper copy of the HLS must go in the cumulative folder. If another language is indicated in SAMS during the enrollment/registration process it must be printed out by the MSIS clerk, a copy sent to the EL Coordinator within 3 days, and the copy placed in the student's cumulative folder with the completed ELPA Screener.

The completed survey becomes part of the student's cumulative record and must be available for future reference.

The Principal or designee will be responsible for forwarding a copy of the HLS or referral to the district EL coordinator within 3 days of enrollment so screening can be arranged. Potential EL students **must** be screened within 30 calendar days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year (10 days from enrollment date after school is underway).

The EL Coordinator will review the HLS to determine if any prior assessments have been done and then arrange to administer the ELPA21 Screener within 30 calendar days of enrollment at the beginning of the year (10 days from enrollment date after school is underway.). In addition to this survey, the student may be identified as having a primary or home language other than English by other documentation or observation from teacher or other school personnel that indicates that a student:

- Speaks a language other than English
- Understands a language other than English, OR
- Has a language other than English spoken at home

Each campus EL contact will be responsible for the EL student folders. These folders serve as documentation of Title I federal programs. They can also be audited at any time by district, state or federal auditors.

Step 2 – Placement Test for Instructional Placement

Smith County School District uses the MDE adopted the ELPA21 Screener to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement.

- Potential EL students identified by the HLS during registration during the beginning of the school year must be assessed for English-language proficiency within 30 calendar days of enrollment.
- Potential EL students who register after the beginning of the school year must be assessed within 10 school days of enrollment. All personnel administering and scoring the

placement test are certified teachers and have undergone test training.

- The LEA test security plan describes who will administer and score assessments, and what training is required to ensure valid and reliable results.
- The student's placement test report must be placed in their cumulative record.

The ELPA21 Screener assesses English language proficiency in all four domains of language development: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each grade cluster has a different scale for proficiency ranges. ELPA21 Screener yields an overall composite score based on the language domains tested. Adhere to the ELPA21 testing guidelines when determining eligibility for placement in the English language instruction educational program: Students that are "not proficient (NP)" or "approaching proficient (AP)" are eligible for the EL Program. Students that are scored "proficient (P)" are not eligible for the program.

Step 3 - Parent and Family Notification

Smith County will provide written notification to parents or guardians of their children's recommended placement in an EL program within 30 days of the start of the school year (or within 10 days for later-arriving students).

Opt-Out Guidelines

Any parent or guardian whose child is receiving or is eligible to receive EL services has the right to decline or opt his or her child out of any or all EL services. Smith County School District may not recommend that a parent or guardian opt a child out of EL programs or services for any reason. In order to ensure parents/guardians' decision to opt out is informed and voluntary, the District will provide guidance in a language parents or guardians can understand to ensure that they understand their child's rights, the range of EL services that their child could receive, and the benefits of such services.

- The District will retain appropriate documentation to demonstrate that a parent or guardian knowingly and voluntarily opted his or her EL child out of EL programs or particular EL services.
- Opting out of EL programs or particular EL services does not affect a student's ability to participate in any other programs or services, such as special education services.
- If a parent or guardian decides to opt his or her child out of EL programs or particular EL services, that child retains his or her status as an EL.
- The District remains obligated to take affirmative steps and appropriate action required by civil rights laws to provide the EL student meaningful access to its educational program. Thus, the District will continue to periodically monitor the opted-out student's academic progress.
- If the District finds that a student is struggling, it must take appropriate steps to assist the student. These steps must include reassessing the student's English Language Proficiency (ELP) using the screener; notifying the student's parent or guardian about his or her child's lack of progress, and encouraging him or her to opt the child into EL programs

and services; and providing supports for the student's language acquisition, such as offering professional development (PD) in second language acquisition to the student's core curriculum teachers.

- All EL students, even those who have opted-out, must have their English Language Proficiency reassessed yearly during the annual ELPA21 assessment period. After it is determined the EL no longer qualifies as an EL, the District must continue to monitor the student for at least 4 years, just as it would an EL who has received EL programs and services.

Step 4 – Placement in a Language Instruction Educational Program

After ELs have been identified using the ELPA21 Placement Test, the District will provide ELs with appropriate language assistance services and programs. Smith County School District has developed an instructional program based on a pull-out model for its students. Students are encouraged to work on Mississippi benchmarks while in the mainstream classroom although accommodations are usually needed. Classroom teachers and the EL teacher collaborate in order to meet each student's specific needs.

With regards to second language acquisition research, each pull-out group utilizes the concepts of Content-based English as a Second Language Instruction to develop each student's ability in English. With this approach, students make use of learning tasks, instructional materials, and classroom techniques from academic content areas as a means to developing language, study skills, and content. The current reading series is used as a main component of the program. Then, the program is enhanced to meet the individual needs of the students within the program. Appropriate EL services are offered until ELs are proficient in English and can participate meaningfully in educational programs without EL support. This includes continuing to provide EL services to ELs at the highest levels of English proficiency until they have exited from EL services and programs.

In Smith County, the goal for students who are ELs is that they attain fluency in English, master the state's academic content standards as demonstrated by proficiency on the state's required student assessments, and pass any other state required tests. Smith County follows the guidance provided by research related to student placement and retention that shows that ELs must be placed age appropriately in the mainstream classroom. This provides them with access to challenging, grade-level content instruction and the opportunity to interact with their

English-speaking peers and is considered generally to be the least restrictive educational environment. At the high school level, SCSD awards credits based on transcripts provided by the students/parents/guardians, even if the coursework was taken in another country. If transcripts are in a language other than English, translations must be sought so that credits can be awarded.

Step 5 – Developing a Language Service Plan

The Mississippi Department of Education, along with SCSD, requires each student designated as an EL to have a Language Service Plan (LSP), which must be updated annually until the student exits the EL program. The Student Evaluation Team (SET) must meet to develop the LSP at the beginning of each academic school year. This team must be composed of teachers (including EL teachers), administrators, counselors, and parents or guardians. The team will meet quarterly to evaluate the student's progress and make necessary adjustments. A copy of the LSP must be provided to all teachers who work with the EL student.

The LSP must contain the following:

- Student's demographic information
- Date of first enrollment in a U.S. school
- Yearly ELPA scores
- Classroom accommodations
- State testing accommodations
- Signatures of SET members

To prevent any issues with EL students in middle and high school, all LSP's must have a copy of the student transcripts signed by the principal, as part of the LSP so that protocols may be put in place to help students graduate on time.

Step 6 – EL Data Entry

The accuracy of EL data is of the utmost importance. Once a student has been identified as an EL the district must ensure the student is correctly marked in their student data package. This information will upload to MSIS once the district has submitted their data to the Mississippi Department of Education. Districts should ensure each column on the EL roster screen of MSIS is completed. This information should be checked monthly for accuracy.

Once a student is identified as EL or immigrant, the EL Coordinator sends the student's name to the District MSIS clerk who flags the student in the system. The EL Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the MSIS file to ensure its accuracy.

ASSESSING ENGLISH LEARNERS

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that the LEA must assess all ELs using the annual English language proficiency assessment, including those students whose parents have declined to enroll them in, or had them removed from, Language Instruction Education Programs (LIEPs).² Additionally, all ELs enrolled in schools served by the State must be assessed annually using the State's English language proficiency assessment. [ESEA Section 1111(b)(2)(G)]. "State or district assessment policies, if they include a right to opt a child out of assessments, do not override or diminish the LEA's obligation to assess 100 percent of ELs using

the annual English language proficiency assessment.

English Language Proficiency Test

The ELPA21 Assessment is a secure, large-scale, English language 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. The ELPA21 Assessment incorporates both English language arts (ELA) standards of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards and English Language Development Standards to measure each student's English language proficiency level and growth.

If an EL cannot be assessed on ELPA21 Assessment in one or more domains of the English Language Proficiency Test due to a disability, and there is no appropriate accommodation, the student's English language proficiency will be based on the domains that can be assessed.

Mississippi State Tests

EL students in grades 3-12 are required to take the MDE required academic assessments (MAAP grades 3-8, MST2 grades 5 & 8, MKAS grades Kindergarten and 3rd grade Reading, and SATP – Algebra, Biology, English II, and ACT – 11th grade).

Reasonable accommodations must be provided on assessments administered to ELs. In the current edition of the Mississippi Testing Accommodations Manual, accommodations are available for students who have been officially identified as ELs. Smith County strives to ensure that the use of accommodations deemed appropriate for ELs on any state assessment does not deny ELs the opportunity to fully participate in the assessment and allows the students to receive benefits equal to those received by students not identified as EL.

Classroom Assessments

EL students will be monitored at each grading period through grades, assessments, and teacher/school feedback and classroom observations. Should a student be progressing at a pace less than expected, an individual instructional plan will be created through MTSS and implemented. This plan will address student needs, weaknesses, and strengths and provide the classroom teacher with a targeted plan to help meet the language needs of the student. (The plan will be created by a team composed of the EL teacher, lead teacher, principal, guidance counselor, parents, and classroom teacher(s), as appropriate.)

EXITING STUDENTS

On June 19, 2025, the Mississippi State Board of Education revised the ELPA21 Assessment score requirements for English learners (EL) to officially exit EL status. Under the new policy, the student is required to obtain the following proficiency levels on the ELPA:

- For an English learner to officially exit EL status, the student is required to obtain a Proficiency Determination of “Proficient” on the **ELPA21 Summative Assessment**. A score of “Proficient” means that the student has scored a proficiency level 4 or higher in all language domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing).
- For an **English learner with significant cognitive disabilities (ELSCD)** to officially exit EL status, the student is required to obtain a Proficiency Determination of “Proficient” on the **Alt ELPA21 Summative Assessment**. A score of “Proficient” means that the student has scored a proficiency level 3 or higher in each domain in both language modalities (Receptive and Expressive).

MONITORING STUDENTS

Students who exit the program will be monitored for four years to determine their academic success in the regular school program. Monitoring must be conducted and documented every 9 weeks, with a SET team reviewing monitored students’ grades, assessments and other related data. If an exited EL is not progressing academically as expected and monitoring suggests a persistent language need, SCSD will re-test using the ELPA21 Placement Test to see if the student needs to be offered additional language assistance services. In no case should re-testing of an exited student’s ELP be prohibited. If the student re-enters EL services, the District is required to document the reasons why, as well as obtain the parent’s consent prior to reentry. EL students will qualify for MTSS services under the same criteria of other students in their respective schools.

EVALUATING THE EL PROGRAM

Smith County School District will update its EL plan annually and have it board approved. As part of the update, district staff will consider any changes in EL needs that are the result of changing demographics or academic performance. The plan will be distributed to each school site and will be kept on file at the district office. The plan will be detailed and provide a clear vision of how EL students and families will be served.

To determine the effectiveness of the program, the District will conduct periodic evaluations as well as ongoing analysis of effectiveness. Student achievement data must be used to determine an EL program’s effectiveness and ensure compliance with state and federal reporting requirements. An evaluation of an EL program should not be limited to required data used for accountability purposes but should instead include multiple data points. Data will be gathered, analyzed, and used to strengthen EL programs and services as appropriate. Data points that might be collected and used for evaluation include the following:

- Scores on state and local assessments

- Scores on the English Language Proficiency Test
- Rates of retention
- Exit rates
- Graduation rates
- Participation rates in gifted and advanced courses
- Enrollment rates in prekindergarten and other programs
- Enrollment rates in special education and related services
- Attendance rates
- Participation rates in extracurricular programs
- Suspension rates
- Results of parent and family, student, and teacher surveys
- Results of surveys from other key stakeholders

The EL program evaluations will also include longitudinal data that compares the performance of current ELs, former ELs, and never-ELs. Comprehensive and longitudinal evaluation will help LEAs and schools determine if ELs are meeting college and career readiness standards, participating in and performing comparably to never-EL peers, accessing the same curricular and extracurricular opportunities as their never-EL peers; and exiting EL programs at appropriate rates.

If evaluations show that EL programs are not effective, the District will make appropriate changes to strengthen programs and more effectively serve students. The Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Federal Programs monitors EL programs to ensure that EL plans are in place, effective, and being implemented with fidelity.

Each school will evaluate the effectiveness of its school EL program through the monitoring and evaluation of EL student data on the ELPA21 English Proficiency test, the MAAP test, and the school universal screener tests.

LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM

English Language Acquisition Program

The Smith County School District focuses on providing EL services and programs that meet civil rights requirements and also best meet the needs of the SCSD EL population. The EL services and programs are designed to equip ELs to attain both English proficiency and to participate in the standard instructional program. To attain this goal, the District uses a program based on sound educational theory.

The core EL program is a content-based program of techniques, methodology and special curriculum designed to teach ELs explicitly about the English language, including the academic vocabulary and structures needed to access content instruction, and to develop their English language proficiency in all four language domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). This is usually provided in English with minimal but strategic use of ELs' primary language whenever possible. Depending on the needs of the students, the services may be provided in a pull-out or push-in program.

Accessing Academic Content

ELs will have meaningful access to the core curriculum, such as math, science, social studies and language arts, while learning English. While the district's EL program will focus in part on language acquisition, both EL teachers and academic teachers will work together to ensure that students are mastering the academic language needed to be successful.

Access to Other Program Services

Services for ELs will represent a continuum of available programs and students will 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 will be as bias-free and culturally equitable as possible, while also being consistent with the requirements set for other gifted students. These procedures will 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

Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, and other Advanced Courses

EL students will be provided with access to Advanced Placement, dual credit, and other advanced courses. The ELs must receive language support to assist them in accessing academic content, just as they would if they were in other less accelerated academic courses.

EL Students with Disabilities

If an EL is suspected of having one or more disabilities, the LEA 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.

The District will ensure that a student's special education evaluation is provided and administered in the student's dominant language or other 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 other mode of communication can help educators determine whether a need stems from 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 have knowledge of 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.

The following factors will 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
- 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.

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 14 days to determine whether a comprehensive evaluation must be completed at this time.

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 considered and appropriate environmental modifications or accommodations made

STAFFING AND RESOURCES

The District will diligently search to hire teachers qualified and certified to teach ELs and/or support unqualified staff as they work toward obtaining the qualifications within a reasonable period of time. If the District cannot hire an adequate number of qualified EL trained teachers, it will ensure that current teachers obtain the necessary training, either through Mississippi Department of Education-provided professional development or through training provided through the District. Paraprofessionals may not take the place of qualified teachers and may be used only as an interim measure while the school district hires, trains, or otherwise secures enough qualified teachers to serve its EL students and must always be under the supervision of

a teacher.

All staff, including bilingual paraprofessionals, are required to speak English proficiently. Paraprofessionals who work with ELs also must receive appropriate professional development to build effectiveness.

The District will encourage teachers to pursue the ESL (177) endorsement, and/or take the Praxis Subject Area Assessment, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Test Code 5362). The current Mississippi State Board of Education approved qualifying passing score is 149.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development will be ongoing with a focus on building the competency of staff members that serve EL students. The professional development will be offered at the district and school level as well as direct classroom support. Professional development needs will be determined by a year-end survey of teachers, administrators, EL students and parents and classroom observations.

Principals, lead teachers, and school EL contact personnel will be provided training at the beginning of each school year to review the EL program, changes and updates, policies and practices and provide feedback on the previous year's program. It is expected that this information be shared at the school level, with all personnel involved with EL students. All teachers and administrators in the district will have open access to the district EL plan, guidelines, teaching strategies and professional development materials.

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The District has a legal obligation to communicate meaningfully with EL parents and families and to adequately notify them of information about any program, service or activity called to the attention of non-EL parents. Outreach to parents should help them make informed decisions about their child's education and must include information on how parents can become involved in the education of their children and how they can actively participate in helping their children learn English, achieve high levels in the core academic courses and meet state standards. Also, outreach must include regular meetings for parents and notices of such meetings so that parents have the opportunity to provide suggestions and recommendations. The district will provide agendas and handouts in the chosen language of the parents when possible.

All information must be provided to the parents of an EL child in an understandable and uniform format and to the extent practicable, in a language that the parent can understand. A child cannot be admitted or excluded from participating in a federally assisted education program on the basis of a surname or language-minority status.

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is an ongoing process. The language stages may overlap, and growth may occur at different rates. The ELPA21 Assessments measure language proficiency within five grade spans: K-1, 2-3, 4- 5, 6-8, and 9-12. Within each grade span, a student can be assigned to one of the five proficiency levels: Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Proficient, or Above Proficient. The table below provides the description of learners at each level of proficiency. Based on the assessment results in all five domains of English language skills, a student's language proficiency may be classified based on the language proficiency stages described below:

Proficiency Level 1	<u>Beginning</u> A Level 1 student is beginning to develop receptive and productive uses of English in the school context, although comprehension may be demonstrated nonverbally or through the native language, rather than in English.
Proficiency Level 2	<u>Early Intermediate</u> A Level 2 student is developing the ability to communicate in English within the school context. Errors impede basic communication and comprehension. Lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features of English are emerging.
Proficiency Level 3	<u>Intermediate</u> A Level 3 student is developing the ability to communicate effectively in English across a range of grade-level appropriate language demands in the school context. Errors interfere with communication and comprehension. Repetition and negotiation are often needed. The student exhibits a limited range of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features when addressing new and familiar topics.
Proficiency Level 4	<u>Proficient</u> A Level 4 student communicates effectively in English across a range of grade-level appropriate language demands in the school context, even though errors occur. The student exhibits productive and receptive control of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and discourse features when addressing new and familiar topics.

Proficiency Level 5	<u>Above Proficient</u> A Level 5 student communicates effectively in English, with few if any errors, across a wide range of grade-level appropriate language demands in the school context. The student commands a high degree of productive and receptive control of lexical, syntactic, phonological and discourse features when addressing new and familiar topics.
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EL Grading Policy

Grading

Strict adherence to a “letter” grading system is often inappropriate for EL students. 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. In order to ensure consistency of grading between teachers and/or schools and to ensure EL students do not fail due to English proficiency, grades will be modified for students with a ELPA21 Proficiency Level of 1 or 2 or an ELPA21 score of “Not Proficient.” All students are subject to the attendance policies in regard to awarding credit for classes.

Procedure for EL Modified Grading:

1. Only students scoring a PL1 or PL2 on ELPA21 **or** a score of “Not Proficient” on the ELPA21 will be eligible for modified grading.
2. Students are required to complete assignments to receive modified grading (although assignments and classroom assessments may be modified in accordance with the student’s Language Service Plan)
3. Students that are eligible for modified grading may reattempt a failed assignment.
4. If the student fails a second time, the student will receive a grade of 65 in the gradebook.
5. The teacher will include the original grade and a note explaining that the student is receiving EL modified grading in the comment section of SAMs.
6. Students receiving modified grading will have a note on their report card denoting that they received modified grading due to their status as PL1 or PL2 on ELPA21 **or** “Not Proficient” on the ELPA21.
7. Parents of EL students receiving modified grading must be informed of their child’s EL status and of the modified grading procedures so that they can accurately interpret their

child's report cards and academic progress.

EL Checklist

Checklist for EL Documentation

Student's Name: _____	Yes = Documentation Present No = Documentation NOT Present
1. Home Language Survey (proves that language spoken is something other than English)	
2. Placement Test has been given (30 days calendar days from beginning of school or 10 school days during the year – should be in notes on EL Committee Meeting Form/Eligibility Form)	
3. Based on scores of placement test and/or ELPA21 Scores - Eligibility Form (to be given every year from now on)	
4. Parent invitation/Notification (invite to meeting)	
5. EL Committee Meeting takes place (is there evidence of this?) Parents, student (if in HS), Campus EL contact, District EL contact, classroom teacher (s) (in HS the core subject teachers), STC (or documentation they were told of accommodations), at least one administrator should be present – District EL Teacher responsible for creation of plan but all parties need to be present as part of the committee	
6. Evidence that During the Initial Meeting: a. Introduction of parent/teacher b. Discussion of ELPA21 scores c. Discussion of standardized testing Parent/Guardian Report (Native Language, if applicable) d. Discussion of progress in classroom (<i>All of the above lead to, the NEED for EL services</i>) e. Parent granted permission to participate in program (Permission Form) f. Language Service Plan jointly developed (i.e. all information filled in completely, accommodation codes written out w/call number, all parties present have signed) g. Discussion of classroom accommodations and modifications h. Discussion of testing accommodations i. Signed Language Service Plan	

j. Signed EL Committee Meeting Form/Plan	
7. If no parent came to the meeting, then a copy of all forms needs to be sent to the parent. (You do not ask for the parent to sign the forms if the parent was not in the meeting, however, you do need to make sure they are informed by sending home copies.)	
8. IF parent refuses services, paperwork will still be completed. The student will still be considered EL and given the state's language proficiency exam. District must still provide services to ensure academic success as per federal law.	