

Smith County School District



English Learner Handbook

2025-2026

English Learner Handbook

Plan, Program, Procedures & Assessments

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://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OAE/OEER/EL/EL%20Guidance%2C%20Funding%2C%20and%20Instructional%20Supports_combinedAug2018.pdf.

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

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
PHILOSOPHY AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS	1
LEGAL REQUIREMENTS	1
FREE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS	1
1964 – CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, TITLE VI	2
1970 – MAY 25 MEMORANDUM	2
1974 – LAU V. NICHOLS	2
1974 – EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT (EEOA)	3
SUMMARY OF THE OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS’ POLICY ON ELs	3
DEFINITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER, IMMIGRANT AND MIGRANT	3
ENGLISH LEARNER (EL)	3
IMMIGRANT	4
MIGRANT	5
PROCESS FOR ENROLLING ELs	7
Step 2 – Placement Test for Instructional Placement	9
Step 3 - Parent and Family Notification	9
Step 4 – Placement in a Language Instruction Educational Program	10
Step 5 – Developing a Language Service Plan	11
Step 6 – EL Data Entry	12
ASSESSING ENGLISH LEARNERS	12
ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST	12
MISSISSIPPI STATE TESTS	12
CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS	13
EXITING STUDENTS	13
MONITORING STUDENTS	14
EVALUATING THE EL PROGRAM	14
LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM	15
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAM	15
ACCESSING ACADEMIC CONTENT	15
ACCESS TO OTHER PROGRAM SERVICES	16
Gifted Education	16
Advanced Placement, Dual Credit, and other Advanced Courses	16
EL Students with Disabilities	17
STAFFING AND RESOURCES	18
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	19
PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	19
RESOURCES	21
ONLINE EL SUPPORT WEBSITES	21
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	21

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	23
EL GRADING POLICY	23
EL CHECKLIST	25
THE SIX STAGES OF SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	26
<i>Pre-Production</i>	26
<i>Early Production</i>	26
<i>Speech Emergent</i>	27
<i>Beginning Fluency</i>	27
<i>Intermediate Fluency</i>	28
<i>Advanced Fluency</i>	29
TYPES OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT	31
LOOKING BEYOND VOCABULARY	32
<i>"Bricks and mortar"</i>	32
<i>TWIPs</i>	32
<i>Same Word, Different Meaning</i>	33
<i>Cognates</i>	33
EL INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	35

PHILOSOPHY AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Smith County School District recognizes the need and the requirement to provide EL (English Language 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 parent, 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 children will not fail a subject or be retained in a grade because they do not speak English.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

During the past fifty years state and federal governments have enacted laws and regulations to protect the rights of language minority students. The following is a list of laws and regulations that have been instrumental in establishing federal, state, and district policies related to the education of ELs.

Free and Equitable Education for All Students

Every public school in the United States is required to provide a free and equitable education to all eligible children who live within the boundaries of the school district. In the past, there was some question as to whether school districts were required to educate children who were not legal residents of the United States. However, in 1982 the Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits states from denying a free public education to undocumented immigrant children regardless of their immigration status.

Furthermore, the Court stated that school systems are not agents for enforcing immigration law; thus, schools should not request any information related to U.S. Residency as this might discourage children from attending school. In keeping with this ruling, schools are advised not to request any information of students (immigrant or non-immigrant) which might be used to

disclose undocumented status including Social Security numbers, passports, visas, etc. As a result of this, school districts are only permitted to require two kinds of information for enrollment: proof of residency in the district (i.e. two bills with an address that is in the district) and proof of required vaccinations. As long as students can provide this information, they must be allowed to enroll in school.

Should the school, for whatever reason, come across information regarding the immigration status of students or their parents, it is prohibited under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from providing any outside agency, including the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security, with such personally identifiable information without first getting permission from the student's parents or a valid court order.

School policy should make it clear to all school personnel that their primary responsibility is to provide all students living in the district with a quality education. As educators they should not be involved in any policing activities for ICE, nor are they under any legal obligation to do so.

1964 – Civil Rights Act, Title VI

The 1964 Civil Rights Act stated that: “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin...be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” As a result of this and subsequent related acts, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requires school districts to:

1. Take affirmative action to rectify any language deficiency,
2. Avoid improper assignment of ELs to remedial classes or denial of opportunities to participate in college preparatory classes,
3. Avoid special tracking that operates as an educational “dead-end,”
4. Notify parents of ELs of the same information that all other parents receive, if necessary in a language other than English.

1970 – May 25 Memorandum

The 1970 Department of HEW, May 25 Memorandum, Federal Regulation 11595 stated that: “The district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency of LEP Students.” This document reiterated the responsibility school districts have in terms of the education of LEP students.

1974 – Lau v. Nichols

In this unanimous decision, the Supreme Court decided that equality of educational opportunity is not achieved merely by providing all students with “the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum... Students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.” In addition, the Supreme Court stated that: “Imposition of a requirement

that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must have already acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education.”

As a result, schools must make necessary accommodations and modifications to their curriculum to make it both accessible and meaningful for all students. In some cases, this might necessitate the use of textbooks in the student’s native language, the employment of bilingual tutors, or modifications due to the student’s lack of educational background.

1974 – Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA)

The EEOA stated that: “No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, by ... failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students in its instructional programs.”

While this act did not specify the rights of ELs, the impact of this act on educational programs for ELs has been derived from judicial interpretation which has focused on the phrase “appropriate action.” The standards for complying with this legislation have evolved from federal court cases including: *Castenada v. Pickard*, 1981; *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 1983; and *Gomez v. Illinois State Board of Education*, 1987.

According to the rulings in these cases, appropriate action includes:

1. Programs must be based on sound educational theory,
2. Programs must allocate trained personnel and material resources necessary to implement the program,
3. Programs must provide for evaluation of effectiveness and must implement appropriate changes when needed.

Summary of the Office for Civil Rights’ Policy on ELs

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. In *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court affirmed the Department of Education’s May 25, 1970m, Memorandum that directed school districts to take steps to help ELs overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the district’s educational programs.

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 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 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.

For the school year 2025 - 2026, 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 proofs 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:

- 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?

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 ELPA21 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 parent 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). The notification will include all of the statutorily-required elements.

- Why the child was identified and why the child needs to be placed in a language instruction program.
- The child's level of English proficiency, how it was assessed and the child's academic level.
- The method of instruction that will be used to serve the child, including a description of other methods of instruction available and how those differ in content, goals and the use of English.
- How the program will meet the specific needs of the child in attaining English proficiency and meeting state standards.

- The program's exit requirements and the expected graduation rate.
- How the instructional program will meet the objectives of an IEP.
- Written guidance on the rights of parents to have their child immediately removed from a program upon their request, the options that the parents have to refuse to enroll their child in a program or to choose another program or method of instruction, if available, and how parents will be provided assistance in selecting the best program to serve their child.

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 ELPT 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 ELPT:

- 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.

All classroom teachers who serve ELs will work to help ELs make sense of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards, regardless of language proficiency. As part of this expectation, teachers will incorporate a variety of EL strategies into instructional planning to help students make sense of academic content. Teacher will use visual supports to help build student understanding, understand the basic communication strategies to be used with ELs, and recognize the various learning strategies that help ELs learn. Professional development will be provided to teachers to aid them in this expectation.

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.

Students who appear to be struggling will be offered tutorial services. These services may occur during or after school, depending on the program offered at the school site. The student will also be evaluated to determine if the academic problem is related to lack of mastery in the English language. EL students may be placed in the MTSS process at Tier II once an LSP is written and adequate documentation that Tier I instruction has not addressed any barriers to learning other than the English language barrier.

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 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 supports 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, 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.

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

Smith County School District will hire an adequate number of teachers who are qualified to provide EL services, and core-content teachers who meet requirements in their field will be trained to specifically support EL students. These teachers will meet state requirements and have mastered the skills necessary to effectively teach in an EL program. Since EL services are also integrated with other programs such as gifted education, special education, and remedial services such as Boost, the personnel in these programs will also be trained to support EL students.

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.

The EL Specialist and the school-site EL personnel will be responsible for training the teachers at the school level instructional strategies and interventions proven to be successful in helping EL students succeed.

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.

The SCSD will determine (1) if parents and guardians have limited English proficiency, (2) what their primary language is, and (3) what their language needs are through the questions on the Home Language Survey. If parents request language assistance, it will be provided. The district will provide the language assistance to EL parents effectively with appropriate, competent staff or appropriate and competent outside resources. Students, siblings, friends and untrained staff members are not considered qualified translators or interpreters, even if they are bilingual. All interpreters and translators, including staff acting in this capacity, must be proficient in both English and the target language; have knowledge of specialized educational terms or concepts in both languages; and be trained in the role of an interpreter or translator, and the ethics of interpreting and translating, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of maintaining student, family and staff confidentiality.

RESOURCES

Online EL Support Websites

The Mississippi Department of Education website has a number of instructional supports for administrators, general education teachers, EL tutors, and other educators who work with the EL population. <https://www.mdek12.org/EL>. Resources available on this site include the English Learner Guide, Newcomer kit, Communication Cards (Elementary & Secondary), Sentence Stems, Visual Schedule, Family Welcome Sheet, Newcomer Orientation Kit, and a video series that address specific learning strategies for ELs.

The Mississippi English Learners Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports (from which much of the SCSD EL Plan was taken) can be found at https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OAE/OEER/EL/EL%20Guidance%2C%20Funding%2C%20and%20Instructional%20Supports_combinedAug2018.pdf.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/teaching-english-language-learners> Colorin' Colorado's Webpage. Resources available on this site include articles, sample lesson plans, examples of modified assignments, teaching content to ELs (resources listed by grade), research about teaching ELs.

Resources available at <http://ncela.ed.gov/> U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) include links to articles about federal laws, EL Toolkit and online resource library.

The Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) website <http://www.tesol.org/> available resources include: TESOL Resource Center (under "Connect with TESOL" tab) and information about conferences and workshops.

The Center for Research, Evaluation and Assessment website contains an article about what all teachers should know about instruction for ELs.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/what-teachers-should-know-about-instruction-for-ells.pdf>.

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.

Effective Instructional Strategies

Help EL students adjust to the classroom (through routines, diagrams, writing legibly, frequent summations, language buddy)

1. Using multiple instructional strategies (cooperative learning, peer tutoring, process writing, discovery learning, and technology)
2. Checking student comprehension of content (story strips, sentence strips, dialogue journals, reading logs, role play etc.)
3. Adjusting teaching style (learner-centered approach)
4. Sheltered Instruction: teachers tailor instruction by adjusting the cognitive load, but not the cognitive level (simplify vocabulary, use visuals and gestures, slowing down the speed of verbal speech)
5. Scaffolding of instruction
6. Gradual release of responsibility
7. Oral discussion
8. Cultural and diversity awareness
9. Authentic Assessments
10. Use cognates
11. Explicit instruction for all vocabulary instruction with special attention given to academic vocabulary
12. Native language support, when applicable

EL Grading Policy

Grading

Strict adherence to a “letter” grading system is often inappropriate for EL students. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 dictate that 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. 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 a LAS Screener score of “Not Proficient.” Carnegie unit credit will be awarded to students in levels 1 and 2 with classroom modification and accommodations for student’s success. 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 LAS Screener 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 LAS Screener.
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 (All of the above lead to, the <i>NEED</i> for EL services) 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.	

The Six Stages of Second-Language Acquisition

Pre-Production

This is also called "the silent period," when the student takes in the new language but does not speak it. This period often lasts six weeks or longer, depending on the individual.

Strategies for students in Pre-Production:

- Emphasize listening comprehension by using read-alouds and music.
- Use visuals and have students point to pictures or act out vocabulary.
- Speak slowly and use shorter words but use correct English phrasing.
- Model "survival" language by saying and showing the meaning. For example, say, "Open your book," and then open a book while the student observes.
- Gesture, point and show as much as possible.
- More advanced classmates who speak the same language can support new learning through interpretation.
- Avoid excessive error correction. Reinforce learning by modeling correct language usage when students make mistakes.

Early Production

The individual begins to speak using short words and sentences, but the emphasis is still on listening and absorbing the new language. There will be many errors in the early production stage.

Strategies for students in Early Production:

- Continue the strategies listed above but add opportunities for students to produce simple language.
- Ask students to point to pictures and say the new word.
- Ask yes/no and either/or questions.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss a problem. Have literate students write short sentences or words in graphic organizers.
- Model a phrase and have the student repeat it and add modifications. Teacher says, "This book is very interesting." The student repeats it and says, "This book is very boring." Continue with as many modifications as possible.

- Avoid excessive error correction. Reinforce learning by modeling correct usage.

Speech Emergent

Speech becomes more frequent, words and sentences are longer, but the individual still relies heavily on context clues and familiar topics. Vocabulary continues to increase, and errors begin to decrease, especially in common or repeated interactions.

Strategies for students that are Speech Emergent:

- Introduce more academic language and skills by using the same techniques listed above but beginning to use more academic vocabulary.
- Introduce new academic vocabulary and model how to use it in a sentence.
- Provide visuals and make connections with student's background knowledge as much as possible.
- Ask questions that require a short answer and are literal.
- Introduce charts and graphs by using easily understood information such as a class survey of food preferences.
- Have students re-tell stories or experiences and have another student write them down. The EL student can bring these narratives home to read and reinforce learning.
- In writing activities, provide the student with a fill-in-the blank version of the assignment with the necessary vocabulary listed on the page.
- Provide minimal error correction. Focus only on correction that directly interferes with meaning. Reinforce learning by modeling the correct usage.

Beginning Fluency

Speech is fluent in social situations with minimal errors. New contexts and academic language are challenging, and the individual will struggle to express themselves due to gaps in vocabulary and appropriate phrases.

Strategies for students with Beginning Fluency:

- Have students work in pairs and groups to discuss content.
- During instruction, have students do a "Think, pair, share" to give the student an opportunity to process the new language and concept.

- Ask questions that require a full response with explanation. If you do not understand the student's explanation, ask for clarification by paraphrasing and asking the student if you heard them correctly.
- Ask questions that require inference and justification of the answer.
- Ask students if they agree or disagree with a statement and why.
- Model more advanced academic language structures such as, "I think," "In my opinion," and "When you compare." Have students repeat the phrases in context.
- Re-phrase incorrect statements in correct English or ask the student if they know another way to say it.
- Introduce nuances of language such as when to use more formal English and how to interact in conversations.
- Have students make short presentations, providing them with the phrases and language used in presentations ("Today I will be talking about") and giving them opportunities to practice the presentation with partners before getting in front of the class.
- Continue to provide visual support and vocabulary development.
- Correct errors that interfere with meaning and pre-identify errors that will be corrected in student writing, such as verb-tense agreement. Only correct the errors agreed upon.
- You may want to assist in improving pronunciation by asking a student to repeat key vocabulary and discussing how different languages have different sounds.

Intermediate Fluency

Communicating in the second language is fluent, especially in social language situations. The individual can speak almost fluently in new situations or in academic areas, but there will be gaps in vocabulary knowledge and some unknown expressions. There are very few errors, and the individual can demonstrate higher order thinking skills in the second language such as offering an opinion or analyzing a problem.

Strategies for students with Intermediate Fluency:

- Identify key academic vocabulary and phrases and model them. Ask students to produce the language in class activities.
- Use graphic organizers and thinking maps and check to make sure the student is filling them in with details. Challenge the student to add more.

- Help the student make connections with new vocabulary by instructing him or her in the etymology of words or word families such as, "important, importance, importantly."
- Create assessments that give students an opportunity to present in English after they have an opportunity to practice in pairs or small groups.
- Introduce more academic skills, such as brainstorming, prioritizing, categorization, summarizing and compare and contrast.
- Ask students to identify vocabulary by symbols that show whether the student "knows it really well, kind of knows it, or doesn't know it at all." Help students focus on strategies to get the meaning of new words.
- Have a "guessing time" during silent reading where they circle words they don't know and write down their guess of the meaning. Check the results as a class.
- Introduce idioms and give examples of how to use them appropriately. For example, "Let's wind up our work." What's another way you could use the phrase "wind up?"
- Starting at this level, students need more correction/feedback, even on errors that do not directly affect meaning. They should be developing a more advanced command of syntax, pragmatics, pronunciation, and other elements that do not necessarily affect meaning but do contribute to oral fluency.
- It may also be helpful to discuss language goals with the student, so you can assist in providing modeling and correction in specified areas.

Advanced Fluency

The individual communicates fluently in all contexts and can maneuver successfully in new contexts and when exposed to new academic information. At this stage, the individual may still have an accent and use idiomatic expressions incorrectly at times, but the individual is essentially fluent and comfortable communicating in the second language.

Strategies for students with Advanced Fluency:

- Students at this level are close to native language fluency and can interact well in a variety of situations. Continue to develop language skills as gaps arise by using the strategies listed above. Although the student may seem completely fluent, he or she still benefit from visual support, building on background knowledge, pre-teaching vocabulary and making connections between content areas.
- Offer challenge activities to expand the student's vocabulary knowledge such as identifying antonyms, synonyms and the use of a thesaurus and dictionary.

- Demonstrate effective note-taking and provide a template.

- Offer error correction on academic work and on oral language. Because students at this stage have achieved near-native fluency, they benefit from support in fine-tuning their oral and written language skills.

From <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/language-acquisition-overview> Colorin' Colorado from Language Acquisition: An Overview by Kristina Robertson and Karen Ford, partially republished here with the permission of Colorin' Colorado as a "Non-commercial" republication.

Types of Authentic Assessment

O'Malley, J. Michael, and Lorraine Valdez Pierce. *Authentic Assessment for English Language Learning: Practical Approaches for Teachers*. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1996.

O'Malley and Pierce have categorized common types of authentic assessment and the student actions:

Their examples include the following:

- ❖ **Oral Interviews:** Teacher asks student questions about personal background, activities, readings, and other interests.
- ❖ **Story or Text Retelling:** Student retells main ideas or selected details of text experienced through listening or reading.
- ❖ **Writing Samples:** Student generates narrative, expository, persuasive, or reference paper.
- ❖ **Projects/Exhibitions:** Student works with other students as a team to create a project that often involves multimedia production, oral and written presentations, and a display.
- ❖ **Experiments/Demonstrations:** Student documents a series of experiments, illustrates a procedure, performs the necessary steps to complete a task, and documents the results of the actions.
- ❖ **Constructed-Response Items:** Student responds in writing to open-ended questions.
- ❖ **Teacher Observations:** Teacher observes and documents the student's attention and interaction in class, response to instructional materials, and cooperative work with other students.
- ❖ **Portfolios:** A focused collection of student work to show progress over time.

From <http://ellresourcesinthecontentareas.wikispaces.com/Authentic+Assessments> Authentic Assessment Resources compiled from: O'Malley, J.M. & Valdez Pierce, L. *Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers*, Longman, 1996. Gottlieb, M. *Assessing English Language Learners*. Corwin Press, 2006.

Resources available on this site include: Authentic Assessment articles and examples of Authentic Assessments to use with students.

Looking Beyond Vocabulary

Many people think of vocabulary first when it comes to academic language. While content-area vocabulary words and terms are certainly an important component, academic language also refers to the words and phrases used to connect these key words and to communicate concepts. Here are two different ways to understand a broader interpretation of academic language.

"Bricks and mortar"

Dr. Cindy Lundgren explains the idea of "bricks and mortar," where "bricks" are the key vocabulary words and concepts in a sentence, and "mortar" is the language (such as signal words and phrases) holding the bricks together.

Even though bats have wings, they are not birds.

In this sentence, the bricks are the key vocabulary words in bold:

*Even though **bats** have **wings**, they are not **birds**.*

Yet to fully understand the sentence, students must understand the meaning of "even though."

Here is a sample definition:

- "Even though" means that two items are similar, but they are not the same. In this case, **bats** and **birds** both share a similar feature (having wings), but they are not the same animal.

Understanding signal words and phrases is a key step in a student's ability to "unlock" the academic language they encounter, as well as to start using it correctly themselves.

TWIPs

Debbie Zacarian and Judie Haynes (2010) also look beyond discrete vocabulary words in their academic language definition; including a range of structures they call TWIPs (Terms, Words, Idioms, and Phrases). Here are some examples:

• Terms	• The boiling point of water is 212° F.
• Words	• The Declaration is now on display in Washington, DC.
• Idioms	• She came to town once in a blue moon .
• Phrases	• Based on the data , we agree with the scientists' conclusion.

Note that, in the second example, the "Declaration" is a single word standing in for the official name of a specific document (the Declaration of Independence). Many textbooks used abbreviated terms in the interest of space, which requires students not only to track the references back to the original term but to build on existing background knowledge about the subject being discussed. ELs may need some extra preparation to draw upon or build background knowledge in order to fully understand the academic language being used.

Same Word, Different Meaning

Keep in mind that some key words or terms may have different meanings across disciplines and may be used as different parts of speech in different contexts (i.e., noun vs. verbs):

Word	Meaning/Use
• Table	• Lunch table (Social language), Periodic Table of Elements (Science), Table of Contents (ELA) Multiplication tables (Math), To table (delay) the discussion (Social Studies)
• Plot	• Plot of a story (ELA), Plot of land (Geography), Plot ordered pairs on a graph (Math), To plot a government coup (History)
• Branch	• Branch of government (Social Studies), Branch of a river (Geography), To branch out (Idiom)
• Foot	• Your foot (Health), One foot in length (Math), Foot in your mouth (Idiom), Foot of the mountain (Geography) To foot the bill (Idiom)

As you identify the academic language you will be focusing on in a particular lesson, take a moment to think about whether any of the words or phrases may have another definition so that you can anticipate any possible confusion. You may wish to share your list with your ESL colleagues for input as well.

Cognates

Finally, there is a great tool you can use to bolster academic language for students who speak a language related to English. This is the use of cognates — words that have a similar spelling and meaning in both languages. More than a one third of words in English have a Spanish-language cognate! These often include technical or content-specific words that can help students make a connection between both languages, such as the following:

institution – *institución*

dinosaur – *dinosaurio*

catastrophe – *catástrofe*

biology – *biología*

equilateral triangle – *triángulo equilátero*

ceramic – *cerámica*

artist – *artista*

You can see many more in our list of Spanish-English cognates, and your ESL or bilingual colleagues may be able to think of other related examples as well. Once students know how that a connection exists, they will start noticing more words that are related and they will be able to apply their own existing background knowledge about those words to the vocabulary they encounter. They may need some guidance initially, and we provide some tips on how to use cognates in this Colorín Colorado article to help you get started.

Note: There is such a thing as a false cognate. The most famous one being that *embarazada* in Spanish is not "embarrassed" — it means "pregnant"! It is not a 100% foolproof strategy — but it is generally a very useful tool.

From:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/academic-language-and-ells-what-teachers-need-know>
Colorín' Colorado article by Lydia Breiseth, partially republished here with the permission of Colorín' Colorado's as a "Non-commercial" republication.

EL Instructional Strategies

The following instructional strategies are designed to support ELs' content learning, provide a variety of approaches for completing assignments, and assist with building confidence for the EL student.

E	
Methodologies/ Approaches	Total Physical Response (TPR) Natural Approach Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) Whole Language Approach Language Experience Approach (LEA) Retelling a Story Activating Prior Knowledge
Visuals Graphic Organizers Audio/Visual	Flow Charts Maps Charts Graphs Pictures Semantic Webbing/ Mapping T-Charts Venn Diagrams Story Maps Timelines Videos/Films/CD ROM Demonstrations Captioning Labeling Music/Songs Jazz Chants/Raps CDs – Music/Books Computer/Software
Interactive Strategies Cooperative Learning Other	Peer Buddy Small Group Activities Pairs and Threes Jigsaw "Corners" Think/Pair/Share Group Reports, Projects

	Panel Discussions/Debate Choral Reading/ Read Around Groups Field Trips K-W-L (Know/Wants to Know/Learned) Role Play Games Dialogue Journals
Modified Class Work (Based on Level of English Proficiency)	Vary Complexity of Assignment One-on-One Instruction with Teacher or Aide Modify Nature of Assignment Substitute Diagram for Paragraph Use of Home Language for Instruction Explain Key Concepts Repeat/Paraphrase/Slow Down Vocabulary with Context Clues Reading with a Specific Purpose Use Simple, Direct Language (Limit Idioms) Use all Modalities/Learning Styles Provide Meaningful Language Practice Drills (Substitution, Expansion, Paraphrase, Repetition) Matching with Visuals Unscramble Sentences, Words, Visuals Categorize Vocabulary Context Clues Outline Notes Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (DRTA) Semantic Feature Analysis SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) Summarizing Note taking Word banks Repetition Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Personal Dictionaries Cover, Copy, Compare
Alternative Assessment Instruments	Interview Content Retelling Content Dictation

	Cloze Procedure Graphic Representation Student Self-rating and Evaluation Teacher Rating Checklist Writing Sample Group Testing Observation/Anecdotal Portfolio
Alternative Multicultural Resources	Guest Speakers Use of Community Resources Cultural Sharing Varied Holiday Activities Diverse Literature

Taken from Mississippi Department of Education's English Learner Guide on page 13 & 14 of Section II;

Modified version of the *Multicultural/Foreign Language/ESOL Education Department – ESOL Instructional Strategies Matrix*. Available at:

<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ESE/links/response-to-intervention-teacher-support-team>