



# Language Access Plan to Ensure Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families

## Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School's language access plan.

### Policy Foundation

#### Federal

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) requires states and school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to students learning English by taking appropriate actions to overcome language barriers.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) upholds language access rights for bilingual families by requiring that students be tested in their home language and Individual Educational Plans (IEP) be written in the appropriate home language. IEP meetings must be conducted in the family's home language using a highly trained and qualified interpreter.

#### State

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32 states:

- Subd. 1. Language access plan required. Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, during a regularly scheduled public board hearing, a school board must adopt a language access plan that specifies the district's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. The language access plan must be available to the public and included in the school's handbook.
- Subd. 2. Plan requirements. The language access plan must include how the district and its schools will use trained or certified spoken language interpreters for communication related to academic outcomes, progress, determinations, and placement of students in specialized programs and services; and how families and communities will be notified of their rights under this plan.
- Subd. 3. Regular review. The board must review the plan every two years and update the plan as appropriate.
- Minnesota Learning for English Academic Proficiency (LEAPS) Act of 2014, Chapter 272, H.F. No. 2397, Article 1. The law has three principal goals for all English Learner (EL) students: 1) academic English proficiency; 2) grade-level content knowledge; and 3) multilingual skills development.

## Definitions

**American Sign Language (ASL)** – A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

**Relay** – Telephone accessibility services to people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

**Screen Reader** – Software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.

**Interpretation** – The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language). Interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting information, summarizing or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

**Interpreter** – A person who provides interpreting services.

**Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment** – Equipment that allow a group of people to listen through headsets to information interpreted into their primary language. This method is most appropriate for large group settings and meetings where multiple languages are being interpreted simultaneously.

**Language Assistance Services** – Oral, expressive, written, and technological supportive services that help students and families communicate effectively with school staff. These services ensure students and families can participate fully in school services, activities, and programs.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP)** – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English, including writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension. Federal law uses this term to refer to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

**Emergent Multilingual Speakers** – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English but are in the process of developing their English language proficiency. Language access industry leaders and advocates prefer the use of this term when referring to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

**English Learner (EL)** – A status assigned to students whose primary language is not English, who lacks the necessary skills to understand, speak, read, and write in English but are receiving English language development instructions in a public school or charter setting.

**Home Language** – The language that is most commonly used in the home by members of a family, or the language that parents use when speaking with their children.

**Primary Language** – An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

**Sight Translation** – The oral interpretation of a written document. This occurs when an interpreter reads a document and then provides a complete oral interpretation of the information that it contains.

**Remote Interpreting** – Interpreting that is provided via telephone or video call.

**Translator** – A person who provides translation services.

**Translation** – The restating of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

**Vital Document** – Materials deemed vital to ensuring access to educational services, programs, and activities, or contain information required by law to translate or provide in audio format.

## Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) provides guidance on the Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language that can be viewed on the [English Learner Disability Resources](#) webpage. This guide is only available in English because it was intended for language access practitioners.

## Section 2: The Plan Overview

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School's language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the school into compliance with state and federal language access requirements, including how the school will increase its capacity to address language service and resource needs.

This plan is also a roadmap that will help staff navigate the process of setting deadlines, priorities, and identifying responsible personnel for policy and procedures development; hire, contract, assess, and ensure quality control of language assistance services; provide notice of services; provide training of staff; and conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

## Language Access Plan Description of Services

- All email communications at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are translated into Spanish.
- Simultaneous interpretation is available for in-person communication in Spanish and other languages, as needed, through Language Line services.
- IEPs are translated into Spanish if needed and additional language services are available upon request.
- The CMES website is able to be translated into any language using Google Translate features.
- Families with disabilities who require ASL interpretation, Talk to Text support, or visual displays will be accommodated.
- Families may request additional assistance by speaking to school administration.

## Implementation

- The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that all families receive the language assistance needed. This will be done in collaboration with other administration and teaching staff to document languages spoken and translation/interpretation needs.
- When possible, the English Language Learners Teacher will attend Special Education meetings and parent/teacher conferences to provide a through-line to a child's ELL service.

## Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

- The primary languages spoken by CMES families, after English, are Spanish, Hmong, Oromo, and Somali. Families who may need interpretation/translation are identified through the Home Language Survey or communication prior to enrollment.
- Spanish-speaking administrative staff will support Spanish-speaking families in accessing resources, with direction from the Head of School.

## Timeline

- This plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors on a biennial basis.

## Notice of Services

- Details of this Language Access Plan are included in the Parent Policies Handbook and posted to the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School website.

### Training for Staff

- Staff who have need to communicate directly with parents are given access to the Language Line account for non-English speaking interactions.
- The Parent Policies Handbook is reviewed annually with staff, including the Language Access Plan.

### Plan Maintenance

- This plan will be reviewed by the Board of Directors at minimum every two years.
- Language access by Special Education staff is reviewed regularly at Special Education due process meetings and adjustments made as needed.
- Spanish-speaking staff will review translations of written communications and will recommend changes to the translation software if needed.

### Community Engagement and Partnership

- The annual Parent Satisfaction Survey is distributed in Spanish, as well as in English, and invites parents to address their access to school communications/events based on language.
- Resources for multilingual families are available on the school website and are cultivated by the School Social Worker and partners at the Montessori Center of Minnesota.

### Emergency Communication Protocol

- During emergencies, emails are sent directly to families and texted to families via NotifyMe.
- All written messages are translated into Spanish, whether through email or text.
- Spanish-speaking staff are available to call families in Spanish and Language Line interpretation would be used in the event of a significant emergency related to a specific child.

## Section 3: Procedures

### Overview

This section sets forth guidelines and steps for staff to coordinate, gather data, and deliver uniform services to students, families, and community members.

### Procedures

- Spanish-speaking staff are hired *for their bilingualism* to answer phone calls and emails and interpret in-the-moment conversations between English-speaking staff and parents.
  - If Spanish-speaking staff are not available or a language not spoken by staff is needed, Google Translate will be used for short verbal exchanges.
- For IEP/Special Education evaluation meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or other events that are complicated or confidential, Language Line interpretation services are utilized through Google Meet or by telephone.
- Video calls are available for any family who requires an ASL interpreter.
- Staff who are not hired for their bilingualism, such as paraprofessionals or assistants, may choose to provide interpretation in lieu of childcare during scheduled parent/school events.
- Google Translate will be used for written communications and a Spanish-speaker, hired for their bilingualism, will review the translation to ensure it is clear and communicates the necessary information.

## Appeal Process

- If any constituent has concerns with their ability to access school personnel or information due to language or disability, they may contact Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School, at 651-774-5000 or by email at [alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org](mailto:alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org).
- If these concerns are not addressed adequately, they should be brought to the Board of Directors following the grievance policy guidelines outlined elsewhere in the Parent or Employee Handbook.

**Approved by Board of Directors:** August 19, 2025