English Language Development

How does Camp Hill serve students who need to become proficient in English?

The 2017-18 school year witnessed an overhaul of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. [See the Basic Education Circular (BEC) Educating English Learners (ELs), reviewed July 1, 2017 (22 Pa. Code §4.26).] Names and acronyms were changed; processes and programming were updated and/or changed. There remains some crossover in use of terminology, but it is the amended regulations that drive instruction. It is no longer ESL; it is English Language Development (ELD). A student is no longer an English language learner (ELL); he or she is an English learner (EL). There is now a Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP—an acronym we avoid because of its possible confusion with special education’s IEP acronym). Fortunately, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has updated and improved their website section regarding Educating English Learners (<http://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Curriculum/English%20As%20A%20Second%20Language/Pages/default.aspx>). Any errors in restating/interpreting the information from the BEC or PDE website is this document’s author’s error.

Let’s start at the beginning. For the reader familiar with the enrollment process or who prefers to skip the early stages of how a student is identified as an EL, feel free to advance to the middle.

* **The Beginning**

All students who enroll with Camp Hill are required by federal law to complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). Among other questions, the HLS asks the student’s first language, if the student speaks a language other than English and what language(s) is/are spoken in the home. When enrollment is complete, the registrar sends an email to all staff who need the information collected during registration. In cases where the student speaks a language other than English and/or a language other than English is spoken in the home, the email includes the appropriate district English Language Development (ELD) teacher.

All students whose HLS notes a language other than English receive further inquiry to determine if the student meets eligibility for ELD services. In situations where one answer indicates a language other than English is spoken, the ELD teacher completes a family interview to determine if a language screening is necessary. In situations where more than one answer indicates a language other than English is spoken, the ELD teacher reviews academic records, may conduct a family interview or may proceed directly to the screening process. There are time limits in which to complete these actions that depend on when enrollment occurs.

For some students, the identification process took place while attending a different school. In that case, CH’s ELD teacher receives (or seeks out) a student’s WIDA-ACCESS for ELL’s test score to aid in determining the current program level. For students enrolling from outside the United States or for whom previous WIDA scores are not available, the WIDA screener is administered. (Please digress for a moment to understand WIDA and its testing. WIDA is an educational consortium of state departments of education. Camp Hill uses the online WIDA screener to assist with the identification of English learners, and WIDA-ACCESS for ELL’s is a yearly test given to monitor growth and progress in acquiring the English language. Google it if you would like more information.)

Within the required timeframe, the newly enrolled student is identified as an English learner. Now what?

* **The Middle**

When a student is identified as an EL, a Language Instruction Education Program is started. All Language Instruction Education Programs are to be evaluated annually to review effectiveness and provide evidence of student growth toward proficiency in English and academic achievement. Camp Hill’s program is identified to PDE as mixed classes with English only support. No matter which PDE program designation is appropriate, the program has two components:

1. planned English language development instruction by a qualified ESL/Bilingual Education teacher, and
2. adaptations/modifications in the delivery of content instruction and assessments by all teachers based on students' language proficiency levels and the Pennsylvania English Language Development Standards (PA ELDS) Framework for ELs as well as the Pennsylvania academic standards.

There are two scenarios that are possible with the Language Instruction Education Program:

1. parents agree to both components
2. parents opt-out of the specialized services provided only to EL’s (first component above).

Collaboration between content teacher and ESL teacher is imperative to achieve the second component of the Language Instruction Education Program regardless of whether the EL receives specialized services. At both the elementary and secondary levels, non-opt out EL students receive planned English language development instruction through the ESL teacher. ESL teachers may also “push-in” to classes and/or assist content teachers with adapting and modifying instruction. EL students are provided with iPads to use iTranslate and other apps to assist in understanding instruction and be understood by English speakers. Dual language picture dictionaries are another tool to aid in English language acquisition.

Annually, the WIDA-ACCESS for ELL’s is administered to all EL’s in the spring (usually January through March). The test is completed entirely on-line through the WIDA-AMS site and results of the tests are sent to districts during the summer.

How does an EL student become a former EL?

* **The End**

The PDE has established a reclassification procedure to assist in determining if an EL has attained English proficiency. Additionally, former ELs (FELs) are actively monitored for two years and reported to the state for a period of four years following reclassification.

Before the spring WIDA results are received, students who may have qualifying ACCESS scores (4.5 or above) are selected for language inventories. Rubrics are completed by teachers (for elementary ELs usually the ESL teacher and grade level teacher; for middle/secondary EL’s usually the ESL teacher and ELA teacher). Each completed rubric produces a single score. The sum of the rubric scores are added to the ACCESS *points* assigned to the ACCESS score. There is a minimum threshold for reclassification. When the reclassification score is equal to or greater than the cutoff, the student *should* be reclassified. EL status may be retained if there is compelling, documented evidence that a student should remain an EL. During the two years of active monitoring it is possible that a FEL may be redesignated as an EL.

* **Beyond the end**

What is written above is a simple description of the very complex process of teaching a non-English proficient student to become proficient in English. There are many facets to the acquisition of any language. Working together, teacher to student as well as teacher to teacher or parent/family to school, provides the best opportunity for success. English language acquisition is accomplished through all aspects of the student’s academic life. When communicating with EL family members, the district often uses translation services, such as Language Line or International Service Center.

Camp Hill School District continues to ensure that all English learners receive appropriate instruction to attain English proficiency and that all teachers receive the necessary training, ongoing professional development, and collaborative time to be successful in providing instruction to ELs.