

English Learners
District Plan
2020-21



Meridian Public School District

Legal Foundations

Statutory foundation: Mississippi and federal statutes mandate the necessity for school districts to establish services for English Learners (ELs) and immigrants that are non-discriminatory and based on pedagogically sound educational theory and practice. It is the school district's responsibility to comply with all legal mandates related to English Learners. Meridian Public School District (MPSD) is committed to providing all English Learners full access to the district's instructional programs and the assistance needed to become proficient in academic English.

Educational Theory and Approach

Teaching English to second language learners is not as daunting as it may seem; many people have the misconception that an educator must be fluent in the students' native languages in order to teach them. However, exercises that involve repetition and involve basic language theory can be used to successfully teach students whose first language is not English. It is also important that teachers have a strong command and understanding of the English language and that they use a variety of resources to communicate the basics of word recognition, phonetics, tenses, grammar and reading comprehension.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has utilized the services of WestEd and the Understanding Language Initiative at Stanford University to develop a new set of English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards. The ELP Standards, developed for K, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grades, highlight and amplify the critical language, knowledge about language, and skills using language that are in college-and-career-ready standards and that are necessary for English language learners (ELs) to be successful in schools. The 10 ELP Standards highlight a strategic set of language functions (what students do with language to accomplish content-specific tasks) and language forms (vocabulary, grammar, and discourse specific to a particular content area or discipline) which are needed by ELs as they develop competence in the practices associated with English language arts (ELA) & literacy, mathematics, and science (Bunch, Kiber, & Pimentel, 2013; CCSSO, 2012; Lee, Quinn, & Valdez, 2013; Moschkovich, 2012; van Lier & Walqui, 2012). The five ELP levels for each of the ELP Standards address the question, "What might an EL's language use look like at each ELP level as he or she progresses toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities?"

English as a Second Language (ESL) Pull-Out – Based on an established schedule, English language learners are pulled from their mainstream classrooms for a portion of the day to receive instruction in English language development either individually or in small groups. This program model is used at all grade levels (Grades Pre-K-12). Since the program emphasizes both academic language and social language proficiency, the EL tutors base their curricular materials and resources on English language proficiency standards established by:

- Meridian Public School District (MPSD)
- MDE approved ELP standards

Newcomers Class- This class is created based on need. If a student in grades 6-12 has been in an English speaking school for less than 2 years and has scored Not Proficient upon screening OR the overall score on the most recent annual assessment was Beginning or Early Intermediate, then the student can be considered for the Newcomer class. This class will be formed only if there are enough students in grades 6-8 and 9-12.

Identification of Potential ELs

Educational decision making for ELs requires procedures for identification, assessment, and proper program placement. The MDE, in conjunction with federal guidelines regarding ELs, provide the guidance LEAs need to identify, assess, and place students into an appropriate language instruction educational program.

The identification and placement of ELs in an appropriate language program that assures them of an equitable, quality education is a four-step process.

Step 1 – Home Language Survey

Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency

Step 3 – Parental Notification

Step 4 – Program Placement

Step 5 - Development of a Language Service Plan

Step 6 - English Learner Data Entry

Step 1 – Registration and Home Language Survey (HLS)

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, Language Minority Compliance Procedure requires LEAs to identify Limited English Proficient (LEP) and immigrant (aged 3 through 21; were not born in the U.S.; and have not been attending one or more schools in the U.S. for more than 3 full academic years) students. The Mississippi Department of Education has selected the Home Language Survey (HLS) as the tool to identify LEP students. The purpose of this survey is to determine if there is a primary language other than English spoken in the home. Schools have a responsibility under federal law to serve students who are LEP and in need of ESL or bilingual instruction in order to be successful in core academic subjects. Given this responsibility, the District has the right to ask for the information they need to identify these students.

The parent, guardian, accompanying adult, or unaccompanied student will complete the Meridian Public School District's enrollment application which includes the Home Language Survey (HLS) and identification of immigrant status. Proof of residency, proof of required vaccination, and proof of age as required by MS Code 37-15-9 will be collected for enrollment. Meridian Public School District will assist families in providing all requirement documents and not bar students from enrollment based on a lack of required documents as allowable by federal regulations. The HLS must be completed for all new entering students at the time of registration .

School personnel will not require parents to disclose their immigration status nor require social security numbers (*Plyer v. Doe*, 1982 Supreme Court Decision). A student number will be assigned to all students regardless of whether they possess a social security card or not.

The HLS is part of MPSD's registration process. The parent or guardian of all students must complete the HLS at the time of initial enrollment into a Mississippi school, and the HLS becomes part of the student's permanent record through the student's graduation. It may be helpful to conduct an interview with the student and/or parents during the enrollment process.

*It is essential to note that all ELs and immigrant students must be allowed to attend school, even if they are unable to present a birth certificate, social security number. If immunization records are not available from a previous school or doctor, students can begin the immunization series at the local public health department.

Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency

Conduct an initial assessment of English language proficiency to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement decisions. A student whose HLS indicates the presence of a language other than English must be assessed for English-language proficiency within thirty (30) days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year. Assess students who register after the beginning of the school year within two (2) weeks of enrollment.

The LAS Links Placement Test helps determine eligibility for placement in MPSD's English language development program. The LAS Links Placement assesses English language proficiency in all four domains of language development: listening, speaking, reading, and writing to ensure that student's language needs are properly identified and addressed through the MPSD's educational program. This screening tool is used to determine whether a child is eligible for English language instructional services. If determined that the student needs services, the student is classified as EL in MPSD's student identification system.

The LAS Links Placement yields an overall composite score, which corresponds to a Proficiency Level based on the language domains tested. Students whose proficiency level is **Not Proficient** or **Approaching Proficient** are eligible for EL services. Students whose proficiency level is **Proficient** will not be considered an English Learner and will not receive services.

Students who were previously enrolled in another Mississippi LEA or another LAS Links state may not need to be assessed with the LAS Links Placement Test, providing they have test results available for review.

The LAS Links Placement should be considered as only one piece of evidence in the decision-making process regarding placement of students in grades K-12. A teacher's best professional judgment, other assessments, and extenuating circumstances, such as the student's

age and amount and quality of previous schooling, should be considered when making decisions for educational instructional services.

Step 3 – Parental Notification

Prior to the initial placement of a student in a language instruction educational program, the LEA or school must notify the student's parents or guardians. Parents are not required to respond to the notification in order for the student to participate in the LEA's language instructional program; parents do have the right to waive Language Instruction Educational Program and remove their child from the district's English Language Instructional Program. However, if a student has been classified as an EL, based on the HLS and the LAS Links Placement Test, the student is still required, by federal law (Section 3122 and Section 1116 of NCLB) to take the ELP assessment until the student has tested proficient in English.

Step 4 – English as a Second Language Program Placement

ELs come to school not only to learn how to communicate socially, but to become academically proficient in English. Learning social English is just the tip of the iceberg. Just because they can speak on the playground, talk to peers, and use everyday English does not mean that they are up to speed in academic English. To the contrary, these ELs are not yet proficient enough to handle the standards-based curriculum. They lack the academic vocabulary needed to develop the content knowledge in English that they will need to succeed in future schooling. By recognizing these two types of proficiencies, you can help expedite your ELs' academic English through program placement.

The first rule for assigning English Learners in an educational program is that students should be placed at the age appropriate grade level (per Office for Civil Rights Guidelines).

Grade Level: K-8

Students will be placed in grades according to chronological age in grades K-8.

Note: There are some situations that allow for exceptions to the general rule. If a student is not much older than six and has not been in a school before, it is often best to place the student in kindergarten. If an EL student is developmentally delayed or has suffered serious deprivation, then the EL students may need to be placed at a lower grade level. In any event, EL students will never be more than a year behind their age appropriate grade (per MDE).

Grade Level: 9 - 12

High School age students will be enrolled in high school as long as they are under 21 years of age. In cases where graduation will not be possible by age 21, the parents and students will be informed of other options (GED classes, Adult Basic Education, etc.) by the guidance counselor or ESL teacher. If parents proceed in enrolling the student in high school, the fact that the student will not be able to graduate due to lack of course credit will be fully explained. An interpreter may be needed for this purpose. **No student will be denied the opportunity to attend high**

school so long as he/she is less than 21 years of age. Students with no academic records will be placed in the ninth grade. If records are received at a later date, the transcript will be evaluated to determine academic course credit and the student will be reassigned to appropriate classes and grade levels. The guidance counselor or a person trained in transcript evaluation will interview the student to determine the length of time the student spent in each class per week. Course credit will be awarded to the amount of credit awarded for contact hours as outlined by the Carnegie Unit Standards.

All ELs will participate in the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System as required by state and federal regulations. This includes the yearly administration of the LAS Links in the spring. Results of the LAS Links will be available to parents and students during the first nine weeks of the new school year. Parent reports are available in English and Spanish. A Spanish language interpreter can be available to translate MAP and SATP2 scores if the parent wishes.

Step Five - Development of a Language Service Plan

The LAS Links Placement test is administered for each EL student within 30 days of the beginning of the school year or within 14 days of registration, mid year. At the K-5 level, EL students whose assessment places them in the Not Proficient (NP) or Approaching Proficient (AP) categories are placed in an ability-level-appropriate English Learner ESL instructional group (pullout or inclusion). Once a student has been identified as an EL student, ESL teachers must develop an English Language Service Plan (LSP), which should be filed and updated annually until the student exits EL status. The Language Service Plan must include student information: demographic information, the date of first enrollment in U.S. schools, ELPT score results, classroom accommodations, and signatures of SET members. ESL teachers complete the Language Service Plan and SET members review plans after students are identified

English Learner Data Entry

Once a student has been identified as an English Learner, the district must correctly flag the student as EL in the student data system. The information will be uploaded to MSIS once Meridian Public School district has submitted their data to the Mississippi Department of Education. Each column on the EL roster screen must be completed in MSIS. Data must be updated and verified monthly for accuracy.

Grading English Language Learners

In the past, the Mississippi Department of Education has adopted guidelines for grading and retention of English language learners. Teacher may use the English proficiency level to inform and modify instruction. The EL tutors will make available to the teachers at the TST/SET meeting the 'Can Do Descriptors' denoting the student's level in each area of language proficiency with goals for moving to the next level. Students at proficiency levels one, two, and three do not have sufficient language to be accurately graded, so MDE suggests the following modifications.

Kindergarten – 5th Grade:

1. Levels 1-2 (Beginning) or Not Proficient on Placement Test
 - a. 65 -100% Passing (S=Satisfactory)
 - b. 46 - 64% Passing (N=Needs Improvement)
 - c. 0 - 45% (U=Unsatisfactory) Documentation necessary
 - d. EL noted on the report card

2. Level 3 (Intermediate) or Approaching Proficient on Placement Test
 - a. Common criteria for assigning grade (with necessary accommodations and modifications)
 - b. EL noted on the report card

3. Level 4-5 (Proficient - Above Proficient)
 - a. Common criteria for assigning grades (With necessary accommodations and modifications)
 - b. EL noted on the report card

6th Grade – 12th Grade:

1. Levels 1- 2 (Beginning) or Not Proficient on Placement Test
 - a. 65 -100% Passing (S=Satisfactory). With necessary accommodations and modifications
 - b. 46 - 64% Passing (N=Needs Improvement). Documentation necessary
 - c. 0 - 45% (U=Unsatisfactory) Documentation necessary
 - d. EL noted on the report card

2. Level 3 (Intermediate) or Approaching Proficient on Placement test
 - a. Common criteria for assigning grades
(With necessary accommodations and modifications)
 - b. EL noted on the report card

3. Level 4-5 (Proficient- Above Proficient)
 - a. Common criteria for assigning grades
(With necessary accommodations and modifications)
 - b. EL noted on the report card

Award Carnegie unit credit to students in levels 1-2 based on classroom modifications and accommodations for students success.

Per MDE, EL Guidelines – January 2011, pp. 50 - 51, *“No failing grades may be given during the ELS’ progress from Level 1 – entering through Level 3 – Developing Language Proficiency.”*

Retention is generally not recommended for any EL. The decision to promote or retain must be made on a case-by-case basis.

Exiting Process

The SET/TST will consider MDE's exit criteria as they determine status for exiting ELs. This review will be documented. To exit EL status, EL students must post an overall score of 4 or higher overall on the LAS Links assessment. Additionally, students are required to score a 4 or higher in BOTH reading and writing to exit. All scores must be posted on the same administration of the test and subtest scores are not allowed to be banked. Students of all grade levels K-12 will exit if they meet the LAS Links requirements. Students should be monitored for four years after they exit.

Note: Students are required to pass the subject area tests in order to receive a regular high school diploma. Graduation requirements are determined by the year the students entered the ninth grade.

During the required four year monitoring period, the student is no longer considered LEP or an EL. He/she will no longer need accommodations or modifications and will not take the state approved English Language Proficiency test. When a student exits, he/she will not longer be counted in the LEP subgroup.

If during the four year monitoring period indicators arise that the student is not being successful, support services may again be offered based on student needs. Services could be limited to a specific domain area of listening, speaking, reading, or writing; or, if necessary, the student could return to EL language program services.

Monitoring- 4 years

ELs who have exited the LEP subgroup will be monitored by classroom teachers as well as EL tutors. Monitoring the students' progress will include

- Classroom grades
- Standardized tests
- Communicating with classroom teachers as needed
- Communicating with the exited students as needed
- Communicating with parents as needed

Students' grades will be documented each 9 weeks. All communication will be documented.

Staffing and Resources

An ESL program coordinator at the district level has oversight of the ESL program. The ESL program coordinator works with the ESL teachers, school staff, the district curriculum coordinator, and the special education coordinator to coordinate services for English Learners. The EL coordinator is responsible for ensuring that schools within Meridian Public School District know and understand federal and state mandates, policies and procedures for EL

students, and the importance of collecting and submitting data in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Mississippi Department of Education.

Each school is provided with the services of an EL teacher/tutor based on program needs. The role of the EL teacher is as follows:

- Provide English language instruction for students
- Collaborate with school staff in the language development of ELs
- Obtain Home Language Surveys in which a language other than English is indicated
- Administer placement test for identification of ELs
- Ensure all original EL documents are filed in the students' cumulative folder
- Maintain and distribute EL rosters to stakeholders as changes occur
- Collaborate with SET team to ensure exiting and monitoring criteria are met
- Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure best practices and supports for EL are made available
- Continue to participate in opportunities which will further expand expertise in the field
- Perform tasks and assume responsibilities as may be assigned by the EL coordinator or superintendent
- Adhere to the Mississippi Code of Ethics
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy of all Meridian Public Schools' records

Determination of Immigrant Status

Students who meet the following stipulations are classified as immigrants.

- 1) Ages 3-21
- 2) Were not born in the United States
- 3) Have not been in a United States school for more than 3 consecutive years

Decisions regarding immigrant status are made within 30 days of the student's enrollment. Upon determination that a student identifies as an immigrant, school officials or other appointed district personnel will add the student's information to the district's student information system. School officials keep record of all classifications, changes, decisions, etc., in the student's cumulative folder at the school.

ELs and Other District Programs

MPSD operates as a School-wide, Title I district; therefore all students have the right to participate in the full range of all programs including Gifted and talented, Special Education, non-academic and extracurricular activities.

General Timeline of Services

August- New potential ELs (see Home Language Survey) will be screened and a plan of services will be established. Send parental notice of services. Identify students who have met exit criteria and begin 4 year monitoring period.

August/September- Set tutoring schedules. Share EL lists to each school. Provide EL training to teachers.

August-October- Meet with parents. Complete LSPs and testing accommodations. Send copies to all school test coordinators.

November/December- Continue to monitor exited students. Make changes as needed to ELs' Language Service Plan and accommodations. Update EL list. Meet with students, parents, and teachers as needed.

January/February- Continue to monitor exited students. Make changes as needed to ELs' LSP and accommodations. Update EL list. Meet with students, parents, and teachers as needed. Meet with MPSD test coordinator to prepare for the annual language proficiency test. Send parents testing notifications.

March- Administer the annual language proficiency test (within MDE approved testing window).

April/May- Continue to monitor exited students. Make changes as needed to ELs' Language Service Plan and accommodations. Update EL list. Meet with students, parents, and teachers as needed. Compile end of the year data.