

## TCS COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH LEARNER DISTRICT PLAN 2023-24

### Section A: Theory and Goals

The instructional goals of the ESL Program in the Tuscaloosa City Schools are as follows:

- To assist English Learners in attaining English proficiency to allow successful independent mastery in the regular education classroom.
- To assist English Learners in reaching their full potential in mastering grade-level academic standards.

According to research, it takes the average student from one to three years to acquire the social language skills needed to function successfully on a daily basis; moreover, it takes approximately five to seven years to acquire the language skills necessary to function in an academic setting at the same level as the student's native English-speaking peers (Cummins, 1979). Working with this premise in mind, the Tuscaloosa City School System has developed a plan to meet the needs of the ELs.

An English Language Development Program is primarily used with ELs in grades K - 12 using the ESL (English as a Second Language) model. In limited cases, the Newcomer class is used at the high school level if determined appropriate by the EL Committee based on the student's proficiency and limited-formal education. In addition, the Push-In or Pull-out model is used if determined successful for an individual student. Using the ESL model, lesson planning, instruction and assessments are accommodated by the classroom teacher based on the individual proficiency level of each student. Classroom teachers with ELs are provided with opportunities to receive professional development and coaching on language development strategies. Because ELs are included in the mainstream classroom, the following are promoted as good teaching strategies for all students: Turn and Talk, TWIRL (Teach, Write, Investigate, Read and Listen), explicit instruction, language, print-rich environments, frequent use of visual materials, small group instruction, active engagement, differentiated instruction and assessment, project-based learning and cooperative learning. Both classroom and testing accommodations are provided for students based on individual proficiency levels. An emphasis is placed on all four language domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

A variety of materials is used for instruction. These include textbooks (Pearson's Scott Foresman Reading Street with differentiated instruction for ELs), dictionaries (Oxford Picture Dictionary, word-to-word translation dictionaries), Reading Horizons Elevate, computer software (Imagine Learning and other district EL software), videos, listening stations, games (Bingo, Scrabble, word puzzles), purchased ESL programs and language development activities. Many of these scientifically researched-based materials and evidenced-based materials have been authored by well-known researchers in the second language acquisition field, and incorporate accepted ESL teaching strategies.

In compliance with *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, the state of Alabama has adopted a set of English language proficiency standards, known as WIDA English language development (ELD) standards. These standards are to be implemented by the classroom teacher, and will provide a curriculum/assessment resource anchored in academic content standards. Furthermore, the WIDA standards will establish a common system of measurement to define and determine how ELs acquire language across the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Section B: Identification and Placement Procedures**

1) Procedures for identifying the EL Advisory Committee

The Federal Programs Director extends an invitation to principals, teachers, parents, EL staff and Central Office staff to participate in the Federal Programs Advisory Committee. EL parents will be invited to participate as well via email or phone invitation.

2) Methods for identification, placement, and assessment

**REGISTRATION PROCEDURES and IDENTIFICATION**

Documents for Registration:

- **Proof of Age** – A valid birth certificate, a valid passport, or other valid document listing date and place of birth such as religious document, hospital records, baptismal certificate, an entry in a family Bible, adoption record, an affidavit from a parent, or previously verified school records.
- **Proof of Immunization** – The State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization, available at the County Health Department or a physician’s office. The Tuscaloosa City Schools will facilitate this process if a student does not have proof of immunizations.
- **Registration Forms** – School registration forms are to be completed and filed at the school along with proof of residency.
- **Home Language Survey** – System-wide form to be completed and signed by the parent or guardian **during registration**. This form will be filed in each child’s permanent record.

A *Social Security Card* is **NOT** necessary for enrollment, or for school lunch forms. If the student does not have a social security card, the school can assign an identification number.

If immunization records are not readily available at the time of registration, the dates of immunization may be obtained by calling the child’s previous school or health department. If all else fails, the student can begin the immunization series at the local health department.

**ELs entering the U.S. should 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 age-appropriate English-speaking peers. It is important that ELs be placed in the least restrictive educational environment. At the high school level, credits should be awarded based on transcripts provided by the students/parents, even if the coursework was taken in another country. If transcripts are in a language other than English, translation should be sought so that credits can be awarded.

**ELs shall NOT be denied enrollment due to a lack of appropriate documentation.**

**The Home Language Survey** shall be the identification tool for potential English Learners (ELs). This survey will be administered to the parents of **ALL** students **at the time of registration** by the staff member responsible in each school for registering students (secretary, registrar, guidance counselor, teacher, or administrator) or via online registration. ALL paper Home Language Surveys must be placed in students’ *Cumulative Record Folders*.

Home language surveys, which include any language other than English on any one question, must be referred to the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department within three (3) school days. This notification should be made by sending a copy of the home language survey to the Administrator of English Learners at the Central Office.

## **LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT**

When the Home Language Survey (HLS) indicates that a language other than English is spoken at home, the ESL Specialist will administer the language proficiency placement test, WIDA Kindergarten Screener or WIDA Screener to determine the level of English language proficiency within ten (10) school days after the academic year has begun and within the first thirty (30) days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year.

The WIDA Kindergarten Screener and WIDA Screener are divided into the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for all grades, K – 12. Placement for Kindergarten students as well as first semester of first grade students will be determined from oral proficiency scores. Second semester of first grade through twelfth grade students will be placed on an overall composite of all four domains. Each language domain contains multiple sections and addresses language proficiency in content areas such as language arts, math, science and social studies.

ACCESS for ELLs is an annual assessment that indicates the progress students have made from year to year and annual proficiency level. The assessment addresses social and instructional language as well as language arts, math, science, and social studies. ACCESS for ELLs and the WIDA Screener assessments will be administered according to grade cluster and/or proficiency level:

The WIDA English Language Development Standards include six (6) proficiency levels, which are:

- Level 1 – Entering
- Level 2 – Emerging
- Level 3 – Developing
- Level 4 – Expanding
- Level 5 – Bridging
- Level 6 – Reaching

Students in grades 2-12 scoring less than a 5.0 composite score on WIDA Screener will be placed in the ESL Program. The EL Committee will discuss new students for placement. Students scoring less than 4.5 in kindergarten and the first semester of first grade in oral proficiency will be placed in the ESL Program. All EL students will participate in ACCESS for ELLs regardless of participation in Title III supplemental services until the student scores an overall composite of 4.8 on ACCESS for ELLs. The ACCESS results are delivered to each building principal. **The ACCESS Individual Student Report must be placed in the student's cumulative folder each year.**

## **PLACEMENT PROCEDURES**

### **Home Language Surveys**

Home language surveys, which include any language other than English on any question, must be referred to the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department within three (3) school days. This notification should be made by sending a **copy** of the home language survey to the Administrator of English Learners at the Central Office. The ESL Specialist will administer the WIDA Kindergarten Screener or WIDA Screener to determine the level of English language proficiency with ten (10) school days after the academic year has begun and within the first thirty (30) days of enrollment.

### **English Learner Committee**

Each school shall form an EL committee consisting of a content area teacher, an ESL Specialist, the school counselor, literacy coach, an administrator, an interventionist (where available), parents and others as designated by the principal. Schools may use the existing RTI Team as the EL Committee, but understand the distinct roles of each team. The EL's parent will be invited to participate in EL Committee decisions whenever possible. The Committee shall review all relevant information and determine appropriate placement and exit from the ESL program.

The responsibilities of the EL Committee in determining the needs of ELs and student eligibility for ESL services include the following:

- Make recommendations concerning the accommodations of each student.
- Provide written notice to the parents of the Committee's recommendation for the child to participate in the ESL program. According to Title III, Part C, Section 3302(a), each LEA shall, "not later than thirty (30) days after the beginning of the school year, inform a parent or the parent of a limited-English proficient child identified for participation in, or participating in" an English Language instruction program, about the details of the program. If a student enrolls after the school year has begun, the LEA must carry out the parent notification requirements within two (2) weeks of a student begin placed in such a program. Parents are not required to respond affirmatively to the notification for the student to participate in the ESL program. Students may also qualify for Title III supplemental services. Upon receipt of written instructions from the parent to deny Title III supplemental services, however, the EL Committee must amend the I-ELP to reflect no supplemental services. The teachers and school are still obligated to provide appropriate accommodations and to utilize strategies to ensure that the student's English language and academic needs are met; the student will still be classified as EL in the student information system and will still participate in ACCESS for ELLs until reaching 4.8 or higher.
- Recommend and monitor the participation of eligible ELs in any other applicable program: i.e., Title I, at-risk, homeless, migrant, etc.
- Determine that ELs are eligible to participate in all academic and special programs on the same basis as the native English-speaking students.
- Review the English Learner's progress in language acquisition and academic achievement on a semi-annual basis.
- Recommend exiting the ESL program when ELs become proficient in English and have met exit criteria.
- Determine, according to state guidelines, to what extent an EL is to participate in the statewide assessment program.
- Make recommendations to school decision makers on professional development for staff and parents regarding EL success.

The following documentation must be maintained in the EL student file:

- Assessment data (ACCESS and Kindergarten WIDA Screener/WIDA Screener)
- Academic data (when provided)
- Entry date into local school system
- Classroom observations and anecdotal records of teachers/tutors (when necessary)
- Classroom and testing accommodations (or located in Ellevation)
- Home Language Survey (paper copies prior to online survey)

All members of the EL Committee shall observe all rules and laws governing the confidentiality of information concerning individual students.

### **General Education Placement**

Research related to student placement and retention shows that ELs should 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, credits should be awarded based on transcripts provided by the students/parents, even if the coursework was taken in another country. If transcripts are in a language other than English, translations should be sought so that credits can be awarded.

### **Advanced Placement (AP Courses)**

English Language Learners are eligible to participate in advanced placement courses; however, according to the College Board Advanced Placement Program, accommodations for ELs are not permitted on AP Exams. Please note that ELs enrolled in AP courses should receive classroom accommodations so that they have access to the content. It is important that this information is shared with students and parents.

### **Foreign Exchange Students**

There are no special exceptions for Foreign Exchange or F-1 Visa students who are English Learners for the purposes of English language proficiency assessments as long as they attend a school in the United States. Foreign Exchange or F-1 Visa students who are LEP must receive ESL services, and if applicable, Title III Supplemental Services. Any student identified as a Foreign Exchange Student who is not working toward a diploma is **not** required to take tests currently required by the state.

## 3) Methods and procedures for exiting students from the LIEP and for monitoring progress

### **ESL PROGRAM EXIT PROCEDURES**

There is no time limit for participation in the ESL program. The student's need is the sole determining factor, and a student may participate in the ESL program as long as the EL Committee determines the student eligible. **ELs will receive EL service until the student scores 4.8 (Composite Score) on the state English language proficiency test, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0.**

A written notice will be provided to the parents that their child will be exited from the ESL program. The notice shall be printed in English and whenever possible in the parents' primary language.

## **ESL MONITORING PROCEDURES**

Exited students are monitored for a period of four years to determine if they are academically successful without specific language supports. The student will be monitored at grading periods coinciding with the issuance of report cards during the first year. In the second year, the student will be monitored at the end of each semester.

Any combination of the following criteria can be used to determine success:

- Content area grades and/or progress
- Standardized test scores
- Attendance
- Teacher observations
- Parent observations
- Student observations

If these reports indicate that the student is experiencing difficulty in the regular program, the ESL Specialist will meet with the EL Committee. The Committee will use all available information to determine whether the student’s difficulties are due to lack of English proficiency. This does not mean that the student will be placed back into the ESL program. It could mean that the student may need other services. If they are to be placed back into the ESL Program, they should be retested and placed in the program like a new student. It is highly recommended using the WIDA Model as a re-screener.

### **Section C: Programs and Instruction**

1) Programs and activities that will be developed, implemented, and administered to ensure ELs acquire academic language as part of the core LIEP

- Each student has an I-ELP communicated with teachers and administrators and monitored during the academic year.
- A bilingual family literacy program will support families and students in attaining literacy skills.
- Additional supports are available for students who are not making adequate progress.
- Based on grade level and proficiency levels, English Learners participate in Imagine Learning Language and Literacy digital instruction.

2) How the LIEP will ensure that ELs develop English proficiency

English Learners are immersed in the regular education classes. Therefore, they are exposed to classes with non-ELs. Individual English Learning Plans are developed for each student and are communicated with teachers of ELs. Teachers meet the needs of each student based on the student’s proficiency, WIDA Standards and CanDo Descriptors. Students will be assessed annually for adequate progress in language acquisition. In addition, ESL Specialists communicate with classroom teachers and attend meetings to address progress concerns. The I-ELP will be amended as needed to meet the needs of the individual student.

3) Grading and retention policy and procedures

**ESL GRADING GUIDELINES**

English Learners work under a dual burden: learning a new language and learning new content in a language they have not yet mastered. The guidelines below must be followed to comply with federal law (*Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016* (ESSA) and assure that ELs are not being discriminated against due to the language barrier. Documentation of these components (lesson plans, work samples, and ongoing assessments) should be maintained by the classroom teacher.

- Grading is based on accommodated work at the student’s proficiency level. Teachers should refer to the accommodations and Can-Do Descriptors listed in the I-ELP for each EL.
- ELs must not be retained on the basis of a lack of English language proficiency. A grade of *F* cannot be assigned to an EL without **full documentation of accommodations given over the entire grading period** to assure the student has full access to the content of the academic program. This will be presented to the EL Committee.
- Grades placed in a student’s cumulative folder must reflect the student’s academic achievement on grade-level academic content and student academic achievement standards.
- Retention of ELs shall not be based solely upon the level of English language proficiency (Section I, Part G, Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of *Lau v. Nichols*). **An ESL Specialist must participate on the school’s retention committee to assist the team with ruling out language as the barrier. The TCS Retention Policy/Procedures Manual addresses the retention of ELs.**

4) Specific staffing and other resources to be provided to ELs through the program

**ESL STAFF**

The Tuscaloosa City School System will strive to employ educational personnel who have formal training in teaching second language learners. All teachers of English Learners are fluent in English. Certified teachers in the area of ESL will be recruited. Non-ESL certified teachers will receive adequate training and will be encouraged to work toward the attainment of ESL certification.

The ESL staff works collaboratively with school and district administrators, the Federal Programs Director, the School Improvement Administrator, the Assessment Administrator, the Technology Department, the Assistant Superintendents, the Special Education Director, teachers, and other appropriate personnel to ensure success of ELs. The staff is responsible for monitoring English language acquisition, assessments, tutoring, and progress of ELs and Former ELs, as needed. All ELs receive their primary instruction from certified teachers through the regular academic program and their I-ELP.

5) Method for collecting and submitting data

The Tuscaloosa City Schools will comply with state and federal guidelines related to collecting and submitting data. Each year, the data compilation will be recorded and submitted to the ALSDE. Please see specifics under ESL Program Evaluation.

6) Method for evaluating the effectiveness of the program

**ESL PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The Tuscaloosa City ESL program will use both formal and informal methods of evaluation to determine progress of the district's instructional goals:

- To assist limited-English proficient students in attaining English proficiency to allow successful independent mastery in the regular education classroom.
- To assist limited-English proficient students in reaching their full potential in mastering grade-level academic content.

A formal evaluation of the ESL program will be conducted at the end of each school year. This information will be placed in the ESL Data Compilation Report and will be submitted to the Alabama State Department of Education annually.

This evaluation will include, but is not limited to, collected data concerning the following:

**General information including demographics and enrollment**

- Student population by race and ethnicity for each school
- Number of ELs by grade level and native language
- Number of ELs with limited-formal schooling

**Student identification and assessment**

- Individual/position who is responsible for distribution and completion of Home Language Survey
- How HLS is maintained

**Student progress within the program**

- Beginning English proficiency level and academic level of each student
- Number of years in ESL program
- Type of English language instructional program each student received
- Current English proficiency level and academic level of each student

**Student exit information from the ESL program**

- Criteria used by the TCS to determine when a student is ready to exit the ESL program
- Transitional services for exited student if available
- Number of students who have exited the program

**Staffing/Training**

- Number of certified ESL teacher
- List and brief description of ESL training provided to all personnel at each school
- The number of people who attended ESL trainings

**Participation in other programs**

- Number of ELs referred for special education evaluation
- Number of ELs currently enrolled in special education
- Number of ELs referred for admission into the gifted program
- Number of ELs currently enrolled in the gifted program



**Communication**

- The number and names of languages for which Tuscaloosa City Schools has written school-related documents.
- A list of interpreters who are readily available to assist parents and where the list is maintained
- A description of activities to involve parents/guardians of ELs in the educational process

**General Comparison Information**

- Drop-out rates for both Tuscaloosa City Schools and ELs
- Truancy petitions for both Tuscaloosa City Schools and ELs

To complete the system-wide evaluation process, some of this information will be compiled into a system report; then reviewed in order to identify deficiencies. Once deficiencies are identified, strategies will be developed to correct the deficiencies for the upcoming year. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, workshops and other professional development activities for ESL staff, administrators, counselors, instructional coaches, secretaries, bus drivers and classroom teachers; purchasing updated and/or new materials and teaching supplies; employing additional staff; and conducting research on specific areas that need to be addressed.

7) Method of identification and referral of ELs to the Special Services Program including Gifted Ed

**ELs and Other Building Teams**

1. The ESL Specialist will be a part of the IEP team for all students who are EL and have a disability. The IEP and I-ELP will work concurrently to provide supports for the students. This information should be included as part of the IEP on the Profile Page.
2. If an EL does not have an IEP, but is being discussed for concerns non-related to English as a second language, then RTI is the appropriate vehicle, provided the ESL Specialist is a part of the team. **Once second language acquisition has been eliminated as the barrier** to achievement, ELs must be served in the same way as all other students.
3. The EL Committee and the Problem Solving Team are separate entities but may include some of the same members. Duplication of personnel on the both committees is permissible. However, each team has a distinct role. Appropriate personnel to serve on the EL Committee include content-area or general classroom teachers of ELs, interventionists, reading coaches, school administrators, counselors, parents and the ESL Specialist.
4. When determining eligibility for Special Education, the ESL Specialist must be a member of the team and will work with the team to assist in securing services of someone to assist with native language. Also, the ESL Specialist will assist the team in how the person will communicate with the child/parent in his/her native language. The materials and procedures used to assess a suspected disability of an EL must be selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which the student has a disability and needs special education, rather than measuring the student’s English language skills. The *Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) (290-8-9.04(1)(e)* states that in order for an EL student to be deemed eligible, the Team must determine that the communication disorder exists in the child’s native language and is not the result of learning English as a second language. With the assistance of the ESL Specialist, the Team should determine if the English proficiency is comparable to peers. If not, the assessments must be administered in the EL’s native language when such a test format is

available. If the team determines that information from administration of the assessments in both languages is appropriate, then this procedure should be completed. Any nonstandard administration of assessments should be documented on the *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services* form.

5. Gifted Specialists will invite ESL Specialists to eligibility meetings for ELs being referred. ESL Specialists will provide information regarding the EL’s English proficiency and communication requests from parents.

**Section D: Assessment and Accountability**

- 1) Method for holding schools accountable for annually measuring the English proficiency of ELs and for participating in the state-administered testing program

ACCESS for ELLs is an annual assessment that indicates the progress students have made from year to year and annual proficiency level. The assessment addresses social and instructional language as well as the language of language arts, math, science, and social studies. Every EL1 and EL2 will take the assessment annually until reaching a 4.8 or higher composite score. The assessment coordinator will provide a mandatory annual training to principals to communicate requirements.

Administrators will receive a spreadsheet with ACCESS for ELLs data showing each student with his/her target goal and the actual score. These target goals are based on the Cumulative Growth Chart provided by the ALSDE. Schools with an N count of 20 or higher will be held accountable at the school level on the state report card. Schools without an N count of 20 or higher will continue to review data and calculate growth based on matchback data for each student.

- 2) Method for holding schools accountable for meeting proficiency in academic achievement

All English Learners will participate in both district and state assessments and will be monitored for academic progress in each school. English Learners in their first year in a U.S. school may exempt the reading subtest of ACAP as determined by the EL Committee. English Learners will receive supports in schools based on growth and proficiency scores. District and school leaders will include EL data in Mid-year and EOY reviews. **ELs who have been in an ESL Program less than 6 years will not be counted in the state achievement category for accountability but will count in the growth category.**

**Section E: Parent, Family, and Community Involvement**

- 1) Methods for promoting parent involvement activities to help improve student achievement

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT / COMMUNICATION**

Many parents of English Learners speak little or no English and may be very uncomfortable in the school setting. All important school information sent to non-English speaking parents should be translated into a language that can be understood, to the extent feasible and possible. Local schools are encouraged to use TransACT to provide the majority of this documentation. In addition, all buildings have access to Language Line Services/Interpreters to communicate with parents in various languages.

To facilitate parental involvement, Tuscaloosa City Schools will:

- Evaluate their educational programs annually to identify and eliminate barriers to meaningful involvement and understanding of parents who may be non-English or limited English speaking.
- Provide an interpreter to assist in the enrollment of a limited-English or non-English speaking family, when possible.
- Provide an interpreter for parent-teacher conferences, when possible.
- Ensure, to the extent possible, that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is provided in the parent's native language.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for parents of English Learners (ELs) to participate in the education of their children, including providing information and school profiles in a language and format parents can understand whenever possible.
- Offer opportunities for parents of ELs to participate in the development of school parent involvement policy plans and Title I school-based plans.

According to Title III, Part C, Section 3302(a), each Local Education Agency (LEA) shall "inform a parent or parents of a limited-English proficient (LEP) child identified for participation in" an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, about the following:

- The reasons for identification of the student as (EL)
- The student's level of proficiency and how the level was assessed.
- The method of instruction to be used in the English language instruction educational program.
- How the program will meet the educational strengths and needs of the student including how to meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation.
- Specific exit requirements for the ESL program.
- In the case of a child with a disability, how the program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child.
- The right of parents to have their child immediately removed, upon their request, from the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
- Information pertaining to parental rights to have their child immediately removed from supplemental Title III programs, and options to decline to enroll their child in such supplemental Title III programs or choose another program or method of instruction if available.

Parents will be notified in writing in English and/or the parents' primary language whenever possible. Parents are not required to respond affirmatively to the notification for the student to participate in the ESL program.

2) Methods (in a language they can understand) for notification requirements for ELs students regarding

- EL identification, placement, exit, and monitoring

The district will use the Ellevation data portal to share all information with parents in English and the parent's native language if available. In addition, the district will utilize Language Line and TransACT when needed to clearly explain identification, placement, exit and monitoring as needed.