



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

to Ensure Effective Communication
with Multilingual Students & Families

June 2025



AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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SECTION 1: POLICY DIRECTIVES

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of the Austin Public Schools 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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.

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.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment – Equipment that allows 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 interpreted simultaneously.

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

Austin Public Schools is committed to our [nondiscrimination policy](#), and works to provide equal access to all programs and services without discrimination.

Language service providers have an additional code of professional ethics. 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

Austin Public Schools language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district into compliance with state and federal language access requirements, including how the district or charter will increase its capacity to address language service and resource needs identified in its self-assessment.

The self-assessment process was completed during the 2024-2025 school board by obtaining feedback through collaborative work sessions and interviews with representatives from the following stakeholder groups: Administration, Teaching and Learning, Equity, English Learning, Enrollment Services, Success Coaches, Interpreters, community partners, Health Services, Technology Services, and ML parents. about recommended improvements. Austin Public Schools continues to work to provide quality access to language assistance services, professional development for staff and interpreters, and information for families about how to request language support based on this committee's suggestions for improvements to current processes.

This plan is also a roadmap that will help staff navigate the process to:

- Set priorities and identify 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

Austin Public Schools provides timely, accurate language assistance services to ensure families have access to information in their home primary languages. Remote and oral interpretation, written translations, and sight translations are available to families. Austin Public Schools has a roster of trained interpreters and contracts with local language service providers and Language Line when needed. Written translations are produced by authorized district translators or are sourced through TransAct. Families can request language assistance by contacting district staff or reaching out directly to multilingual Success Coaches.

Language Access for students and families is a critical component in ensuring that multilingual learners and their families have access to educational supports and information. For a comprehensive overview of the academic supports in place in Austin Public schools for students who are learning English, please reference [our LIEP plan](#).

Implementation

Austin Public Schools Language Access Plan was created with input from representatives from the following stakeholder groups: Administration, Teaching and Learning, Equity, English Learning, Enrollment Services, Success Coaches, Interpreters, community partners, Health Services, Technology Services, and ML parents. The Teaching and Learning department will provide oversight for the Language Access Plan, including gathering feedback from stakeholder groups to inform annual revisions to the plan. The district advertises and promotes language assistance services by:

- Directly connecting families with interpreters upon new student enrollment.

- Maintaining an updated directory of interpreters in all district offices and on the district website to help parents easily request language support.
- Frequently sharing interpreter contact information with families on social media and other district communication channels.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

Austin Public Schools collects data from all families upon enrollment about their home primary language, their interpreter preferences and preferred language, and their language preferences for written communications from the district. Teaching and Learning works in collaboration with Enrollment Services to identify demographic trends and respond to language assistance needs. The district also collaborates closely with stakeholders in community organizations to learn about emerging demographic trends and prepares to respond to language needs.

Timeline

The following timeline includes an overview of the timeframe, objectives, and benchmarks for work to be undertaken to implement the plan and maintain this plan:

- Fall 2024-Spring 2025: APS Language Access leadership team attends Language Access Planning training
- February 2025: Feedback gathered from Language Access Planning team and community stakeholders
- April 2025: Draft of Language Access Plan created
- May 2025: Revised Language Access Plan submitted to district leadership.
- 2025-2026: Language Access Plan reviewed and approved by school board at public meeting.
- 2025-2026: Language Access Plan added to Parent Handbook and APS website
- Annually: Language Access Plan will be updated and reviewed by the school board as part of the handbook approval process.

Notice of Services

Language services are advertised in a variety of ways in Austin Public Schools. District staff are trained to reach out to families proactively with an interpreter if they have indicated they need language assistance upon enrollment. Signage will be available in all district offices and on the district website informing families about the availability of free language assistance services. Families can request language support by contacting any district office staff member, reaching out directly to district Success Coaches, or contacting the district equity coordinator. Visual signage in each public-facing district office will advertise free language assistance services.

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32, Language Access Plan Required, the district's plan will be included in the Parent Handbook and updated annually.

Training for Staff

Training staff is a critical component to ensuring successful implementation of the Language Access Plan. Training for front-line office staff in working with interpreters, requesting language assistance, and cultural competence is offered on an ongoing basis. New staff are trained during the onboarding process. Training will include information about how to determine if an interpreter is needed, working effectively with interpreters, how to request district interpreters, and how to request a Language Line interpreter when necessary.

New teacher training is offered annually for all teachers in their first three years of employment with the district, and information about accessing language support and working with interpreters is a component of this training.

All district interpreters are trained in the code of ethics and professional responsibilities and expectations for interpreters. Success Coaches have access to more extensive training, including Special Education interpretation, education terminology, and cultural brokerage. The Community Interpreter training is recommended for Success Coaches and district interpreters and will be incorporated into the professional development plan for these employees.

Plan Maintenance

Austin Public Schools monitors and updates the plan, policies, and procedures, plan performance, and, if appropriate, modifies current language directives, plan, and procedures as part of the annual parent handbook approval process.

The district Equity Coordinator gathers feedback about language access services and revises the plan annually based on stakeholder input and collaboration. To provide feedback about language access services at Austin Public Schools, please contact the Office of Teaching and Learning at 507-460-1912, one of the district Success Coaches, or your child's school.

Community Engagement and Partnership

Community engagement and input is vital to ensuring families are aware of language assistance resources, how to reach out to the schools, and are able to provide feedback. Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework includes a commitment to family engagement and outreach; chapter two of the handbook includes a summary of family and community engagement efforts. Success Coaches are instrumental in building trusting linkages to multilingual students and families, providing community outreach, and informing district practice to ensure a welcoming environment.

Emergency Communication Protocol

Infinite Campus Portal is used to send emergency announcements to families. Announcements are sent as a SMORE link to include translation support. A callback number should be included in all communications in case families have questions about the message.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation Services

AI translation services are used in some instances to help provide information to families.

SMORE Newsletters offer information to families in the language of their preference using AI translation services. Contact information will be included in all newsletters to facilitate access to language services for families with questions.

Talking Points is a multilingual text messaging service utilizing AI translation currently available to families of students in grades 7-12. The district equity coordinator works closely with staff utilizing Talking Points to ensure clarity of communication and connect with human interpreters if families have questions about translations.

The district website is available in multiple languages (via AI translation.)

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

Ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for families and students is a district strategic priority. The following procedures outline how district staff should respond to language assistance requests.

If a family reaches out by phone or in person to request language assistance or accommodations to support the needs of those who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled, staff should greet them warmly and ask them to identify the language or supportive accommodation needed. Staff should then reach out to a district success coach for interpretation or contact the equity coordinator to request additional language services if needed.

Ensuring accurate language preference data is important for ensuring language services are provided in a timely and accurate manner. Families indicate their language preferences upon enrollment. All changes to language preferences are made in collaboration with district interpreters, the Office of Teaching and Learning, and the Enrollment Office. Staff can reach out to any of those offices if a change in language preferences is needed.

Staff are expected to help communicate with families about the availability of language assistance services in the following ways:

- Staff will greet families and ensure they feel welcome, asking if they would like an interpreter if a language barrier is apparent. Staff should ask families what language they speak to help connect with the appropriate interpreter.
- Multilingual signage in offices will inform families of available language assistance services.
- Information about language assistance services is available on the district website.

To accurately determine which language is needed, staff should refer to the following procedures:

- Staff should check Infinite Campus to determine if families have requested an interpreter upon enrolling their children in Austin Public Schools. An indicator will appear next to the name of each individual parent/guardian. Hovering over the indicator, staff will see an “interpreter needed” message that specifies the language requested.
- If no interpreter has been requested, staff should reach out to families directly in English. Many students with a home language other than English do not need an interpreter. Many students who are not Multilingual Learners have parents/guardians who prefer an interpreter. ML status and home language should not be used exclusively to determine the need for language assistance.
- If a communication barrier occurs, staff should politely ask families if they would like an interpreter and ask which language they speak. When working with an interpreter, staff should speak directly to the person they wish to communicate with, not to the interpreter.
- Staff should ensure that interpreters and translators have the resources they need to perform their job duties accurately and in a timely manner. This includes communicating the need for language assistance as soon as possible and providing the interpreter with as much information as possible in advance of the interpreted encounter to help ensure the interpreter is well prepared. Staff should avoid jargon and try to communicate using family-friendly language.

If staff receive correspondence in a language other than English, they may reach out to a district success coach for assistance with interpretation or sight translation. If staff are unsure which language the correspondence is written in, they should contact the district equity coordinator for assistance. All requests for written translation or correspondence should be directed to district administration.

Staff can procure in-person, telephone, or remote interpreter services by reaching out directly by phone or email to success coaches, rostered on-call interpreters, or contacting the equity coordinator.

The use of trained, professional interpreters is recommended in all settings, but is especially important in specialized contexts, including English Learner programs and Special Education settings. Students should not be asked or allowed to provide interpretation services.

Bilingual staff may be asked to support language assistance services if it is pertinent to their job function. If bilingual staff are tasked with providing language support, they should be trained in interpreter ethics and professional responsibilities. Bilingual staff may also choose to serve as interpreters on the district on-call interpreter roster to provide support outside of their contract hours for parent-teacher conferences and other events as needed.

Requests for document translation should be sent to district administration or site administrators, who will determine whether written translation is appropriate. Administration should refer to [MDE's translation process document](#) as an aid in decision-making about translation requests.

Austin Public Schools strives to provide accurate and timely language supports, and any complaints about language access will be taken seriously and promptly addressed by district administration with the support of impartial language interpreters as needed. Complaints can be submitted to the district in any of the following ways:

- Report a concern (via district website.) Written concerns can be submitted in any language.
- By phone or email via district staff
- By contacting Human Resources

Contact Information

For questions about the Austin Public School Language Access Plan, please contact the Office of Teaching and Learning: 507-460-1912.

Resources

[Success Coach Directory](#)

[Report a Concern](#)