



TWIN CITIES
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS

Language Access Plan

**Ensuring Effective Communication with
Multilingual Students and Families**

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Introduction

Twin Cities International Schools (TCIS) language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district or charter into compliance with state and federal language access requirements Minnesota Statute § 123B.32 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which require school districts to provide processes and procedures that effectively assist students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. This plan provides information about the language access tools, processes, and resources available for students, families, and staff in Twin Cities International Schools.

TCIS views multilingualism as a strength and strives to employ staff members who speak the languages that are most spoken by our student population. TCIS is committed to employing at least one member of each grade level or educational department team as well as several key school support personnel who speak the languages that are most spoken by our student population to ensure immediate communication services are available to families as needed in the building at all times.

Federal Requirements

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.

Minnesota State Requirements

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.

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.

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.

Language Access Rights

If you are a parent or guardian of a student in public schools and your dominant language is not English, you have the following rights established by federal law:

- School districts must have a process for identifying your language needs.
- Schools must provide information in a language you understand.
- School districts must provide effective language assistance to you, such as by offering translated materials or a language interpreter.
- Schools must provide you with language assistance even if your child is proficient in English or you have some English proficiency.
- Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for you.
- Language assistance must be free to you.

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.

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). Interpreters 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.

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.

Multilingual Learner - A broad category that includes students who were never identified for English Learner (EL) status, students currently receiving ELD instruction, and those who used to have EL status.

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 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.

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

Translator – A person who provides translation services.

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.

Language Identification Procedures

TCIS will determine parent/guardian language needs through the following procedures:

1. Enrollment Survey: Upon registration, parents/guardians will identify their preferred language and method of communication. This survey is translated into the following language(s), common in our community:
 - Somali
 - English

Enrollment staff are trained in procedures for accessing qualified interpreters to help parents complete enrollment paperwork if needed.

2. Student Information System: The preferred language and method of communication of parents/guardians is available to all staff in Synergy, the Twin Cities International Schools Student Information System.
3. Teacher Communication: Teachers are encouraged to inquire about communication preferences during “Back to School” open house and in their own communication with families.

Resources and Tools to Provide Language Access

School staff will use the following resources aimed at removing language barriers for families in our school community:

1. TransAct ParentNotices: TransACT provides written forms or notices required by ESSA, translated into Spanish, Arabic, Hmong, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, and Karen. All Minnesota districts and charter schools can utilize the TransACT website with free access. Individuals within the district can activate their free account at: <https://minnesota-doe.parentnotices.com>

WHEN TO USE

- Required ESSA parent notifications
2. Document Translation: TCIS translates many documents into Somali language using TCIS staff members trained in translation. Requests for written document translations should be made by email to the school Principal, Director of Operations, or Executive Director at least 2 weeks prior to the date needed. Please include the document to be translated in an editable format.

3. Website Translation: Families can view all TCIS websites in their preferred language by selecting the “select language: option on the home page.
4. Digital Communication Translation: TCIS uses a multilingual phone tree for sending message to all families as well as using communication systems that allow families to receive information in their preferred language (i.e. email/text)

WHEN TO USE

- Formal documents requiring a signature from parents
- Frequently circulated documents such as registration and enrollment forms, student code of conduct, report cards, etc.

IMPORTANT GUIDANCE

- Reliance on unapproved automated translation tools is not recommended.
- When families cannot read written materials, oral interpretation may be necessary.

Interpreter Services

TCIS employs several interpreters in our most common languages: Somali & Oromo. Please contact the front office staff to secure an in-person interpreter. If an interpreter is needed for ASL, TCIS will coordinate interpreter services through an outside agency.

WHEN TO USE

- District-wide initiatives or meetings
- Parent/teacher conferences
- MTSS/Child Study/IEP Meetings

IMPORTANT GUIDANCE

Reliance on untrained students, siblings, or friends to interpret is not acceptable. Students and untrained adults should not act as intermediaries in parent/guardian communication, as it may lead to misunderstandings.

[Working with Language Interpreters: Information for Teachers](#)

Telephone and Video-Remote Interpretation Services

TCIS offers three options for interpretation:

1. Over-the-phone interpreting (OPI),
2. Scheduled or on-demand video-remote interpreting (VRI)
3. In-person interpretation

WHEN TO USE

- Phone calls home
- Parent/teacher conferences

IMPORTANT GUIDANCE

It is not recommended to use on-demand phone or video interpretation services for Individualized Education Program (IEP) or student behavior meetings.

AI Translation Tools

AI translation tools should be limited to brief, non-vital translations only. These tools are suitable for:

- Quick understanding of simple sentences or short paragraphs
- Informal content, like newsletters or general information
- Non-critical communications where perfect accuracy is not essential
- Getting the general meaning of basic text

Critical Limitation. Never use AI translation tools for vital translations.

Federal law requires schools to provide professional translation services for all vital information to Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents. Vital documents and communications include:

1. Educational Rights and Responsibilities:
 - Enrollment and registration materials
 - Special education evaluations, IEP meetings, and related services
 - English learner program notifications and services
 - Gifted and talented program information
 - Report cards and academic progress reports
 - Student discipline policies and procedures
 - Parent-teacher conference communications
2. Legal and Administrative Documents:
 - Grievance procedures and nondiscrimination notices
 - Parent handbooks and school policies
 - Permission forms for student activities
 - Legal notices and official school communications
 - Any document that affects a parent's ability to participate in their child's education

WHY THIS MATTERS

AI translation applications have significant limitations:

- They translate primarily word-by-word rather than contextually
- Important nuances and cultural meanings are often lost
- Complex sentence structures may be misinterpreted
- Technical or specialized terminology may be incorrectly translated
- Context-dependent phrases may be translated literally rather than idiomatically

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOLS

Under federal civil rights law, schools must:

- Provide effective language assistance to English Learner families
- Use appropriate and competent translators and interpreters

- Never rely on students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff for translation
- Provide services that are free to parents
- Maintain confidentiality in all translated communications

Schools that use AI translation tools for vital communications may be violating federal law and parents' civil rights.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Twin Cities International Schools staff are responsible for ensuring meaningful and timely access to information in individuals' preferred languages. This includes principals, assistant principals, assistant directors, teachers, office staff, counselors, cultural liaisons, school nurses, district staff, and all other personnel.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ELD) PROFESSIONALS

Highly qualified, ELD licensed teachers provide multilingual learners additional instruction in English language development to ensure students can access grade-level content knowledge.

Comprehensive support includes:

- **Specialized Instruction:** Teach targeted lessons to strengthen multilingual learners' English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Monitor and report students' language development and academic growth, ensuring their progress receives support and recognition.
- **Family Support:** Help multilingual families navigate the school system by offering resources and guidance to reinforce learning at home.
- **Professional Learning:** Provide teachers and school staff with strategies and resources to understand and meet the needs of multilingual learners more effectively.

CULTURAL LIAISONS

Their work includes:

1. **Facilitating Communication:** Acting as a vital link between families and school staff, cultural liaisons ensure important information is shared effectively in the family's preferred language.
2. **Supporting Multilingual Families:** Cultural Liaisons partner with schools to support the needs of multilingual families. Cultural Liaisons foster a welcoming and inclusive environment where all families feel supported and connected.
3. **Promoting Cultural Understanding:** By educating school staff about cultural backgrounds and unique experiences of multilingual families, Cultural liaisons help create a more inclusive and culturally responsive school community.

Staff Training

Training to prepare staff to support multilingual families includes:

- In-person workshops
- Procedure guides for supporting multilingual families
- New staff onboarding

Language Access Communication

Twin Cities International Schools actively shares the Language Access Plan to ensure families and staff are aware and have the training and resources to use it effectively. Language services are offered to families who indicate a preferred language other than English. Information about Language Services is shared with all families through newsletters, printed flyers, and the district website. All staff receive training through professional development sessions, video tutorials, and detailed step-by-step guides.

This Language Access Plan will be published on the school's website and included in the school's Parent/Student Handbook.

Language Access Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the department of educational equity and multilingual learner programming as part of the yearly Title III program evaluation process to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with evolving needs and best practices. The Twin Cities International Schools Board of Directors will review this plan every two years and update the plan as appropriate.

District Contact

If you have any questions about the Language Access Plan, please contact us via email at kelliw@iecmail.net

For questions regarding the language needs of specific students or families, contact your child's teacher/staff member or the school's main office.

Appendix: Language Access Resources

Professional Document Translation Resources (Minnesota)

- [MDE Translated Documents](#)
- [Minnesota Translations](#)
- [JR Language Translation Services, Inc](#)
- [The Bridge World Language Center](#)
- [Global Translation and Interpreter, LLC](#)
- [University Language Center](#)
- [Parent Resource Center](#)

Professional Interpreter Resources (Minnesota)

- [Minnesota Department of Health Interpreter Search](#)
- [Interpreters in Minnesota](#)
- [University Language Center](#)
- [Parent Resource Center](#)

Interpreter Training Resources

- [Staff Development and Resources for Spoken Language Interpreters and Cultural Liaisons](#)
- [National Accreditation of Educational Translators and Interpreters of Spoken Languages](#)
- [American Translators Association](#)
- [How to Work Effectively with Interpreters](#)

Telephone Interpretation Services

- [LanguageLine Solutions](#)
- [Propio](#)
- [Dialog One](#)
- [Lexikeet Language Services](#)
- [Multilingual Solutions](#)
- [Language Scientific](#)