

Language Access Plan for Shakopee Public Schools

2025 - 2027

Introduction

Shakopee Public Schools (SPS) is committed to providing equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their language background. To support our diverse student population, this Language Access Plan (LAP) ensures that students and families with limited English proficiency (LEP) can fully engage in the educational process, access critical information, and receive the services necessary for academic success. By improving communication between SPS and families whose primary language is not English, the LAP aligns with our mission to offer high-quality education in an inclusive learning environment.

This plan is designed to ensure meaningful access to all educational programs and services, while also fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion. It outlines specific strategies, responsibilities, and resources aimed at removing language barriers, allowing all students and families to engage fully in the school community.

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," the LAP guarantees that LEP individuals receive language assistance at no additional charge. It defines an LEP individual as someone who does not speak English as their primary language and has limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

To develop this plan, SPS conducted a Four-Factor Analysis, which considered:

1. The number and proportion of LEP individuals in our student and family population;
2. The frequency with which LEP families interact with the district;
3. The importance of the programs and services provided by SPS;
4. The resources available and the costs of providing language assistance services.

This plan is a key component of our commitment to ensuring equity, inclusion, and access to a high-quality education for all students in Shakopee.

Language Access Committee

The Language Access Committee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this plan at Shakopee Public Schools (SPS). In addition to overseeing the plan's execution, the Language Access Committee will be tasked with maintaining and updating the plan as the needs of the district evolve. This individual will report to the Directors of Learning Teaching and Equity, and collaborate with school leadership, bilingual staff, and other relevant departments to ensure the successful execution of the plan's directives.

Language Access Committee:

- K-5 Director of Learning, Teaching and Equity

- 6-12 Director of Learning, Teaching, and Equity
 - Equity Supervisor
 - Director of Special Education
 - Director of Technology
 - Multilingual Coordinator
 - Director of Communications and Strategic Planning
 - K-5 Principal Representative
 - 6-12 Principal Representative
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Identification and Assessment of LEP Communities

To effectively identify LEP individuals in our community, Shakopee Public Schools (SPS) will utilize data from various sources, including the American Community Survey and other local demographic resources. Based on this data, we have identified the most common LEP populations in our community, including speakers of languages such as Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, Russian, and others. As our community's demographic makeup continues to evolve, we will regularly assess and update our understanding of the LEP population to ensure that our language access services are responsive to changing needs.

To ensure we are identifying LEP individuals accurately, SPS will employ the following strategies during normal interactions with students, parents, and community members:

- **Assuming LEP if Communication Seems Impaired:** If communication difficulties arise, SPS staff will proactively offer language assistance services to ensure full understanding.
- **Responding to Requests for Language Assistance:** Any individual who requests language assistance will be provided with the appropriate resources and support.
- **Self-Identification:** We will encourage LEP individuals to self-identify their language needs during interactions with school staff.
- **Open-Ended Questions:** Staff will ask open-ended questions to determine the language proficiency of individuals and their need for language assistance.
- **Collecting Language Data:** When students and families first engage with the district, we will collect primary language information to ensure proper language support is available.

By consistently monitoring demographic trends and using these strategies, Shakopee Public Schools aims to provide effective and equitable language access services for all LEP students and families.

Language Access Services

Interpretation Services at Shakopee Public Schools

Shakopee Public Schools (SPS) is committed to ensuring that families with limited English proficiency (LEP) have full access to school meetings, events, and important communication. To facilitate this, SPS offers the following interpretation services:

1. **In-Person Interpretation:** SPS will provide in-person interpretation services for meetings, conferences, and events, such as parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and school activities where parents or guardians with LEP are involved.
2. **Telephone/Video Interpretation:** For remote communication, SPS will utilize telephone or video interpretation services, such as LanguageLine, to ensure parents and guardians can participate in calls or virtual meetings with school staff.
3. **On-Demand Interpreter Access:** School staff will have immediate access to on-demand interpretation services through phone or app-based services to assist with communication when needed.

While no formal certification is required for bilingual staff, interpreters, or translators, those providing these services must be proficient in both English and the relevant language, ensuring clear and accurate communication. They should also understand school-specific terminology and act ethically by maintaining confidentiality and impartiality. Regional nuances should be taken into account to ensure the most appropriate and consistent interpretation.

If a LEP individual chooses to bring their own interpreter, staff will:

- Inform the individual that free language assistance services are available.
- Ensure a formal interpreter is used when the subject matter may involve potential conflicts of interest. Avoid using minors as interpreters unless there is an immediate and urgent need.

When working with an interpreter, whether formal or informal, SPS staff will:

- Clearly explain the purpose of the communication and any technical terms that may arise.
- Avoid the use of acronyms, double negatives, and contractions.
- Speak in short, clear sentences, focusing on one idea at a time.
- Communicate directly with the parent or guardian, not the interpreter.
- Ensure clear enunciation and pause for the interpreter to finish before moving to the next point.

This process helps ensure that all families, regardless of their language background, can fully engage with the educational process and remain informed about their child's progress and school activities.

Translation of Written Documents:

- **Key Documents:** Critical documents such as report cards, school newsletters, consent forms, enrollment forms, and emergency notices will be translated into the most commonly spoken languages in the Shakopee community.
- **Website Accessibility:** The SPS website will offer key information (e.g., registration, academic calendars, and updates) in multiple languages using an online translation tool or by providing translated versions.
- **Signage and Notices:** Important signage within schools, especially emergency evacuation procedures, school policies, and community resources, will be translated into the predominant languages spoken by SPS families.

Technology-Based Solutions:

- **Translation Tools:** Schools will provide access to translation apps and tools, such as Google Translate or similar, to help students and parents engage with materials and communication. This is especially important for less commonly spoken languages.
 - **Language Access Portal:** A digital portal for language resources and services will be available to families to request interpretation or translation services, find available bilingual resources, and access other support.
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Training Staff on LEP Policies and Services

At Shakopee Public Schools (SPS), we are committed to ensuring all staff understand the importance of providing meaningful access to information and services for families with limited English proficiency (LEP). To support this, all staff will receive training on LEP policies and services as part of their New Employee Orientation, with periodic refresher training offered during staff meetings.

After completing the training, SPS staff will understand:

- **Their Responsibility:** The obligation to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to information and services.
- **Handling LEP Encounters:** The correct protocol for interacting with LEP individuals, as outlined in this plan.
- **Bilingual Staff Resources:** How to use the Staff Directory to identify bilingual staff members who are approved to provide interpretation and translation services.
- **Accessing Services:** How to access translated materials and interpretation services for LEP families.

In addition to general training, bilingual staff will receive further training on specialized terminology, ethics, and regional nuances to ensure effective and accurate communication. To be approved as bilingual, staff members must pass a standardized language proficiency exam (or a comparable proficiency assessment) to ensure they meet the necessary standards for language assistance.

This ongoing training ensures that all staff are equipped to support our diverse community, enabling LEP families to fully participate in the educational experience at SPS.

Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Language Access Plan

The Language Access Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this plan and making updates as needed. To ensure that the plan remains responsive to the needs of our LEP students and families, the coordinator will use the following mechanisms:

- **Surveying Staff:** Collect feedback from staff on how frequently language assistance services are used and identify areas for improvement.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Conduct surveys with LEP families to assess their satisfaction with language access services and gather suggestions for enhancement.
- **Observing Interactions:** Regularly observe and evaluate how staff interact with LEP individuals to ensure that services are provided effectively.
- **Feedback from Stakeholders:** Solicit input from community-based organizations, school leaders, and other key stakeholders on the quality of language access services.
- **Engaging with Local Resources:** Stay informed about local demographic trends and community needs through collaboration with local organizations and resources.
- **Exploring New Resources:** Continuously look for new opportunities, such as external funding sources, partnerships with other organizations, or technological innovations, to improve language access services.
- **Monitoring Response Rates:** Track how quickly the district responds to language assistance requests from LEP families.
- **Tracking Service Usage:** Keep records of the services provided to LEP families, including how often they are used and any trends over time.
- **Documenting Resource Allocation:** Maintain a record of funds and staff time dedicated to language assistance services to ensure proper allocation of resources.

This ongoing process ensures that Shakopee Public Schools can continue to improve its language access services, meeting the needs of our diverse student body and their families.

Conclusion

Shakopee Public Schools is committed to promoting linguistic diversity and ensuring equitable access to education for all students and families. This Language Access Plan will help create an environment where every student, regardless of their language background, has the opportunity to thrive academically and become an engaged member of the community. Through effective communication, collaboration with families, and targeted support services, we will continue to work toward breaking down language barriers and providing a high-quality education to all.

Contact Information:

For more information on language access services or to request language assistance, please contact the **Language Access Coordinator** at:

- Email: [Insert contact email]
- Phone: [Insert contact phone number]

Next Steps:

- Sarah/Nika bring to Mike and Jim at check in.
- Bring to committee - reflect on where we are in systems - and then review the LAP
- Create and clean up our systems - how do we ensure we have Language Access and supports when needed.
- FALL review
- Board in Winter

Key Questions:

- Report cards - how do we ensure everyone gets equitable access and know what they mean
- Equitable Interpretation for evening events
- How to we ensure that we have both lines of communication
- How do we anticipate and remove barriers to language access
- How do parents access interpretation services