

## **Language Access Plan: to Ensure Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families**

### DISTRICT: ORTONVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Currently, Ortonville Public Schools serves families who speak English and Spanish at home.

We are committed to ensuring that every family has equitable access to information, and is able to fully participate and benefit from our educational system. Our Language Access Plan is designed to remove language barriers and empower families who prefer communication in a language other than English to engage in their child's education.

This plan supports our diverse community by ensuring families can participate in school communications, events, and decision-making processes, creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

### **Section 1: PURPOSE & AUTHORITY**

#### **Policy Foundation**

This Language Access Plan is intended to align with

- [MN Statute 123B.32](#)
- [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), 42 U.S.C. §2000 et seq.; Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., 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) required state 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.

## **Definitions**

**American Sign Language (ASL)**- A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement to the body. Along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder rises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

**Bilingual Staff:** are fluent in multiple languages but are not trained interpreters. They may assist with some translation and interpreting.

**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

**Language Assistance Services:** Oral, expressive, written, and technological support 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 Proficiency (LEP):** 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 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.

**Primary Language-**An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

**Sight Translation-**The oral translation 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.

**Remote Interpreting-**Interpreting that is provided via telephone or video call.

**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**

[Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Languages](#) MDE's version

### **Section 2: The Plan**

#### **Overview**

Ortonville's District language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district into compliance with state and federal language access requirements, including how the district will increase its capacity to address language services and resources.

The plan aims to eliminate language as a barrier to accessing core information and activities for students and families, ensuring everyone can participate and benefit from the educational system. Ortonville Public Schools are committed to making sure language is never a barrier for students or families. Our goal is to ensure all families - regardless of the language they speak - can access important school information, take part in programs, and fully engage in their child's education.

#### **Description of Services**

Licensed staff who provide direct language instruction, written translation, interpretation, bilingual staff, interpretation at school events. TransAct, Language Line, Kettle Earbuds, American Sign Language etc, Talking Points

Parents and students who need language assistance may contact the school directly by phone. Our phone system includes a Spanish-language option in the automated message menu, which routes the call to a bilingual staff member. This staff member provides support in Spanish, helping families access the information or services they need. Families can expect respectful, timely assistance and, when necessary, follow-up communication to ensure their questions are fully addressed. This system ensures Spanish-speaking families have a clear and reliable pathway to support.

#### **Implementation**

At Ortonville Public Schools, responsibility for overseeing, developing, and modifying the Language Access Plan (LAP) is shared among the Multilingual (ML) teacher, the district administration, and the District Assessment Coordinator. The initial lead for the LAP is the ML teacher, who reviews the plan annually in collaboration with families and staff.

Following this review, the ML teacher works with the District Assessment Coordinator and district administrators to update the plan and ensure it reflects current needs. Any recommended changes are brought to the Superintendent and administrative team for approval and implementation. This team-based approach helps maintain consistency across buildings while staying responsive to family and student needs.

ML staff and support staff along with Building principals are responsible for carrying out the plan within their schools, ensuring that all staff are aware of procedures and supports. Ortonville also collaborates with regional organizations and service providers to strengthen cultural responsiveness and improve

access to multilingual resources. Language assistance services are promoted through translated family communications, enrollment materials, and on the district website. Information about language access is also shared at school events and during parent-teacher conferences to ensure families know how to request help and what they can expect.

## **Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs**

### **For Parents and Guardians**

At Ortonville Public Schools, families are asked to identify their preferred language for communication during the student enrollment process. This information is recorded in the district's student information system, allowing staff to provide appropriate language assistance, such as translated documents or access to a bilingual staff member. Families may update their language preference at any time by contacting the school office.

To support our Spanish-speaking families, we offer oral interpretation and written translation services as needed. In most cases, these services are provided in person or by a bilingual staff member within the district. When in-person services are not immediately available, remote support options - such as phone interpretation - are used to ensure timely assistance.

We also recognize that some families may have limited literacy skills in any language. To support those needs in a respectful and dignified way, our staff is trained to offer information verbally, check for understanding, and provide follow-up communication in a way that meets each family's preferences. Our goal is to make every family feel welcome, informed, and confident in their ability to engage with their child's education.

### **For Students**

All families complete the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) during enrollment. This survey helps us understand each student's language background. If responses indicate the student may qualify for English Language Development (ELD) services, the district administers the state-approved language proficiency assessment to determine eligibility.

If a student qualifies, Ortonville notifies families within the required timeline using translated forms. The notification outlines the type and amount of ELD services their child will receive and informs families of their right to decline services. Additional details about our English Language Development programming are available by contacting the district's ML teacher.

Each year, English learners participate in the ACCESS assessment to monitor progress in English language development. When a student meets the state-established criteria for proficiency, they are exited from ELD services. Families receive written notice when a student no longer qualifies for support, along with information about how the district will continue to monitor the student's progress for the next two academic years.

Additional details about our English Language Development programming are available by contacting the district's ML teacher.

This process helps ensure that students and families receive meaningful language access, supports engagement, and strengthens communication throughout the school year.

## **Timeline**

### **At Enrollment**

- Families complete the Minnesota Language Survey as part of the student registration process.
- Home language data is entered into the district's student information system.
- Families indicating a language other than English receive follow-up to determine if language assistance is needed.

### **Ongoing Throughout the School Year**

- Teachers, paraprofessionals, and office staff monitor for any communication challenges or language-related barriers.
- When concerns arise, staff work with families to clarify preferred communication methods (spoken or written, English or Spanish).
- Staff may request language assistance (e.g., interpreter or translation).

### **As Needed**

- Spanish-language interpretation is provided for parent-teacher conferences, special education meetings, and other important events as needed.
- School communications are translated into Spanish when applicable.
- Bilingual staff provide support for real-time communication needs.

### **Biannually**

- The district reviews the effectiveness of language assistance services and identifies any gaps.
- [Data tracking tools](#) and language preference records are updated.
- Staff receive training on how to request and access translation or interpretation services.
- Interpreter partnerships and translation resources are evaluated and renewed as needed.

## **Notice of Language Services**

Ortonville Public Schools is committed to ensuring families know that language support is available to help them engage fully in their child's education. Language assistance services are advertised through multiple methods, the district website, enrollment materials, and printed school communications as needed. These notices include information in both English and Spanish and explain how to request translation or interpretation.

During key events translating services will be scheduled ahead of time and provided for events such as enrollment, conferences, parent-teacher meetings, school board meetings, and family engagement nights. Parents and students can request translation or interpreting services through bilingual staff. Staff members also proactively identify and offer assistance to families who may benefit from support based on the language noted in their student profile.

## **Training for Staff**

To ensure consistent and effective implementation of the Language Access Plan, Ortonville Public Schools provides staff training on how to access and deliver language services. This includes reviewing procedures for identifying families who need assistance, requesting interpretation or translation, and communicating respectfully across language differences.

Training is offered annually as part of professional development days and new staff onboarding. It includes practical tools for working with bilingual staff, using translated materials, and understanding when to seek outside interpretation support. Training needs are identified through feedback from building administrators, staff observations, and updates in state or federal guidance. The district will continue to adapt training content to address areas of growth and ensure staff are equipped to support all families effectively.

## **Plan Maintenance**

Ortonville Public Schools is committed to keeping the Language Access Plan current, relevant, and responsive to the needs of our students and families. The plan will be formally reviewed every two years by a team that includes the Multilingual (ML) teacher, District Assessment Coordinator, and district administration. This team will examine student demographic data, staff feedback, and family input.

Any recommended updates will be based on changing student needs, new guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education, and the availability of local resources and support. The ML teacher will take the lead in drafting revisions, which will then be shared with the Superintendent and administrative team for review and approval.

In between formal review cycles, the team may make adjustments as needed to respond to new challenges or opportunities. The goal is to ensure that the plan remains a living, working document that strengthens communication, access, and equity across the district.

## **Community Engagement and Partnership**

Ortonville Public Schools believes that strong relationships with families and community partners are essential to student success. We collaborate with a range of local organizations to ensure families, particularly those whose first language is not English, have access to the resources, support, and opportunities they need to fully participate in school life.

Key partnerships include local faith communities, community service organizations, and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. These collaborations help us share information, connect families with services, and build trust beyond the school setting. For example, the district works with ABE providers to help parents strengthen English language skills, access employment resources, and support their children's learning at home.

Family input is a central part of our continuous improvement work. Building administrators are willing to meet with families to listen and learn from their experiences in more personal settings as well.

Our goal is to make every family feel valued, heard, and confident in their ability to contribute to their child's educational experience. By listening to community voices and honoring lived experiences, we continue to strengthen our schools and build meaningful connections across the district.

## **Emergency Communication Protocol**

Ortonville Public Schools prioritizes the safety of all students, staff, and families. In the event of an emergency such as severe weather, a school safety concern, a public health alert, or a schedule change, the district communicates promptly and clearly using multiple communication channels.

The primary tool for emergency messaging is the district's student information system, which sends out automated phone calls, emails, and text messages to families. Parents and guardians are encouraged to keep their contact information up to date to ensure they receive timely alerts. Messages are written in clear, accessible language and translated into Spanish for families who have indicated a preference for communication in that language.

The district reviews emergency communication procedures regularly and includes them in staff training and safety drills to promote consistent and effective response across all buildings.

## **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**

Staff are expected to respond to phone calls or in-person requests from individuals with language assistance needs by using multiple communication tools. This includes returning phone calls in the family's preferred language when possible, and using JMC to send school-wide or targeted messages in the home language recorded in the student information system.

These efforts are supported and led by the district's bilingual staff, who provide translation and interpretation during their designated service time. Building staff coordinate with the bilingual team to ensure timely and appropriate communication with families.

In addition, the Minnesota River Valley Education District (MRVED) provides professional development for Title III paraprofessionals and ML and other staff three times per year. These trainings help staff strengthen their skills in culturally responsive communication, family engagement, and effective support strategies for multilingual learners and their families.

### **Contact Information**

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### **Resources**

The [Refugee and Immigrant Helpline](#) is a new service that connects callers to information, resources and supports in communities across Minnesota. The Resettlement Programs Office needs your help sharing the Helpline with new Minnesotans, community organizations and anyone else who may benefit.

**1-800-814-4806**

Free Telehealth (Counseling) Services in English & Spanish

<https://walkin.org/get-counseling-now/> Migrant Program Resources

Local food shelf