DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH LEARNERS MASTER PLAN

June 2025

DeKalb County School District™

RMC RESEARCH

Prepared by RMC Research

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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Greetings Stakeholders,

As Superintendent of DeKalb County School District (DCSD), it is my pleasure to share our continued commitment to supporting and empowering our English learners. This vibrant group includes more than 18,000 students (20% of DCSD's overall student population) who represent over 127 countries and speak about 160 languages across the district.

Our team of educators, leaders, and support staff will remain steadfast on preparing every English learner to be lifelong learners and responsible global citizens, for success both inside and outside the classroom.

Our focus will continue to include providing equitable access to high-quality instruction, ensuring that our English learners develop strong academic skills while progressing in English language development. This requires investing in targeted professional learning for all staff, delivering culturally responsive instruction, and strengthening partnerships with families and communities, to create inclusive school environments that honor our students' cultural and linguistic experiences.

Our goal is clear: to ensure that every English learner in DeKalb graduates not only with a diploma, but also with the confidence, skills, and global perspectives needed to thrive in college, career, and life. Every English learner deserves the opportunity to be celebrated for their identity and equipped for the future.

The evaluation of DCSD's ESOL program and the development of the English Learner Master Plan, will empower all staff and stakeholders to implement with fidelity and efficacy policies and services, for the success of our multilingual students and families. This vision is supported by clear goals, strategies and resources to guide our work. Our district teams are committed to providing the tools and support needed to help our schools meet the unique needs of our English learners and their families. We believe this effort will benefit not only our students and families, but also our broader DeKalb community.

Thank you in advance for your partnership and commitment to excellence on behalf of our English learners.

Sincerely,

Dr. Devon Q. Horton, Superintendent

DeKalb County School District

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank every member of the Stakeholder Committee for their unwavering dedication and commitment to developing the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) English Learners Master Plan. Their collective efforts and valuable insights have played a crucial role in shaping this initiative, ensuring a lasting positive impact as DCSD continues to prioritize the academic and personal growth of our English learners (ELs).

Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to the RMC Research team, whose partnership, guidance, and expertise will help further equip DCSD staff to support the diverse needs of all ELs in our district.

Lastly, we are deeply grateful to all DCSD stakeholders—especially our English learners and their families—who generously shared their feedback through student, parent, administrator, and teacher focus groups and surveys.

The Stakeholder Committee members named below made significant contributions to the success of this endeavor.

Adam Nykamp, Ph.D. – Indian Creek Elementary School, STEM Teacher

Azi Johnson – Middle School Area EL Coordinator I

Babatunji Ifarinu – Area 2 EL Coordinator I

Chanda Austin – EL Coordinator II

Christina Catinella – Horizon Area EL Coordinator I

Claire Ragsdale – Specialty Area EL Coordinator I

Daniella Bass – EL Coordinator II

Derek Nye – EL Data Analyst

Erica Broadwater – ESOL Specialist

Evelyn Hall, Ed.D. – Executive Director, English Learners Department

Gillian Lee Fong, Ed.D. – Champion Theme Middle School, ESOL Teacher

Gregory Wickersham – International Student Center, Principal

Guadalupe McMurray – Spanish Interpreter

Heather Lieberman – ESOL Specialist

Isabel Sance – Parent School Partnership (PSP) Program Director of MALDEF

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Stephanie Walker – Rockbridge Elementary School, ESOL Teacher

Susan Stoddard, Ed.D. – Lakeside High School, Principal

Tisa Norvel – Federal Program, Coordinator II

Tyiesha Heyward, Ed.D. – ESOL Specialist

Veneshia Gonzalez, Ed.D. – Horizon Area EL Coordinator I

Yvette Drew, Ed.D. – EL Coordinator II

ENGLISH LEARNERS DEPARTMENT VISION, MISSION, AND PRINCIPLES

VISION

English learners (ELs) in DeKalb County School District are equipped and empowered with the knowledge and communication skills necessary to thrive and positively impact local and global societies.

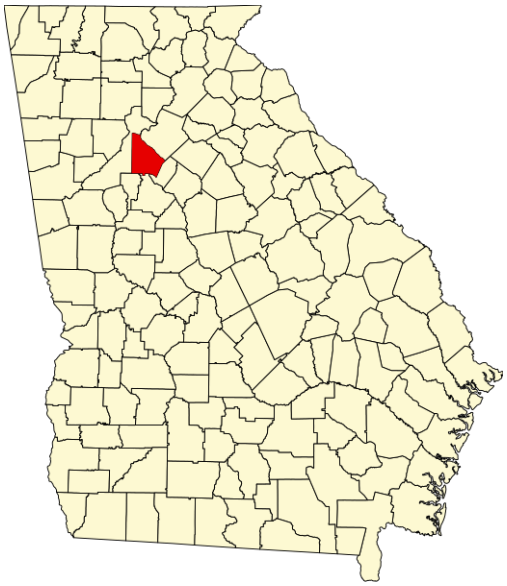
MISSION

To support and enhance the English language development, academic success, and social-emotional growth of English learners, while ensuring access to all educational opportunities

PRINCIPLES

The following principles serve as the overarching guidelines of the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) English Learners Department. They inform our decision-making and actions in service of our English learners, their families, and our community.

1. **All stakeholders** are engaged through effective and accessible communication.
2. **Families, English learners, and educators** share the collective responsibility for student success.
3. **Data analysis** is used to continuously monitor, impact, and drive instructional and programmatic decision-making.
4. **High-quality research-based** instruction and assessment are implemented to positively impact ELs.
5. **Continuous development** of teachers, leaders, and support staff is prioritized and includes systems for monitoring and accountability.
6. **Equity drives our work** by addressing opportunity gaps and systemic barriers that hinder EL student success.



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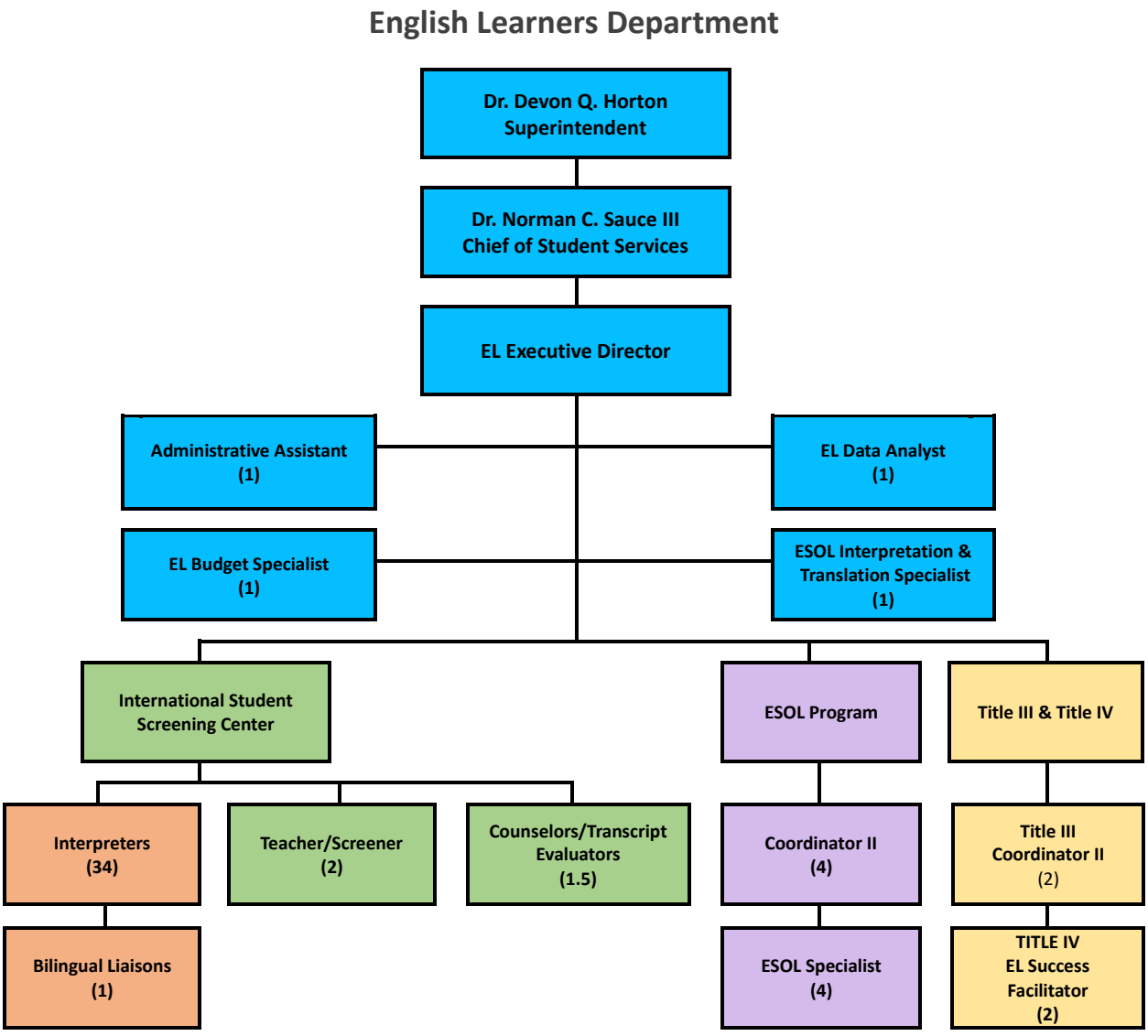
WHO WE ARE

The English Learners Department within the DeKalb County School District plays a pivotal role in supporting the district's commitment to addressing the needs of English learners and their families. Further, the department oversees a comprehensive range of processes and services, such as:

- Entrance and exit procedures of English learners
- Language development and academic instruction
- Professional learning for all staff
- Assessments and progress monitoring
- Translation and interpretation services
- Compliance with federal and state regulations

Figure 1. DCSD English Learners Department Organizational Chart



WHO WE SERVE

DeKalb County School District's English learners represent 20% of the overall student population. They and their families come from unparalleled experiences and backgrounds. Whether they are refugees, immigrants or U.S. born, they contribute valuable assets to their English language development and academic journey. The process for EL identification and entry criteria is shown in Appendix A. The unique needs of each EL subgroup are reflected in the Department's goals described in this plan.

Table 1. Number of English Learners Per DCSD Area

Area	KK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Grand Total
1 - Elementary Schools	567	588	654	745	624	430								**3,608**
2 - Elementary Schools	343	406	470	479	481	409								**2,588**
3 - Elementary Schools	75	93	103	87	94	79								**531**
4 - Middle Schools							1,107	1,080	1,148					**3,335**
5 - High Schools							4	3	9	873	604	389	178	**2,060**
6 - Horizon Schools	440	500	513	524	525	441	58	73	50	802	491	377	295	**5,089**
7 - Specialty Schools	135	158	161	154	123	141	45	231	183					**1,331**
99 - No Area Center	1					1		3	4	10	7	15	7	**48**
Grand Total	**1,561**	**1,745**	**1,901**	**1,989**	**1,847**	**1,501**	**1,214**	**1,390**	**1,394**	**1,685**	**1,102**	**781**	**480**	**18,590**

*Data from May 2025

Figure 2. DCSD English Learners Population Growth

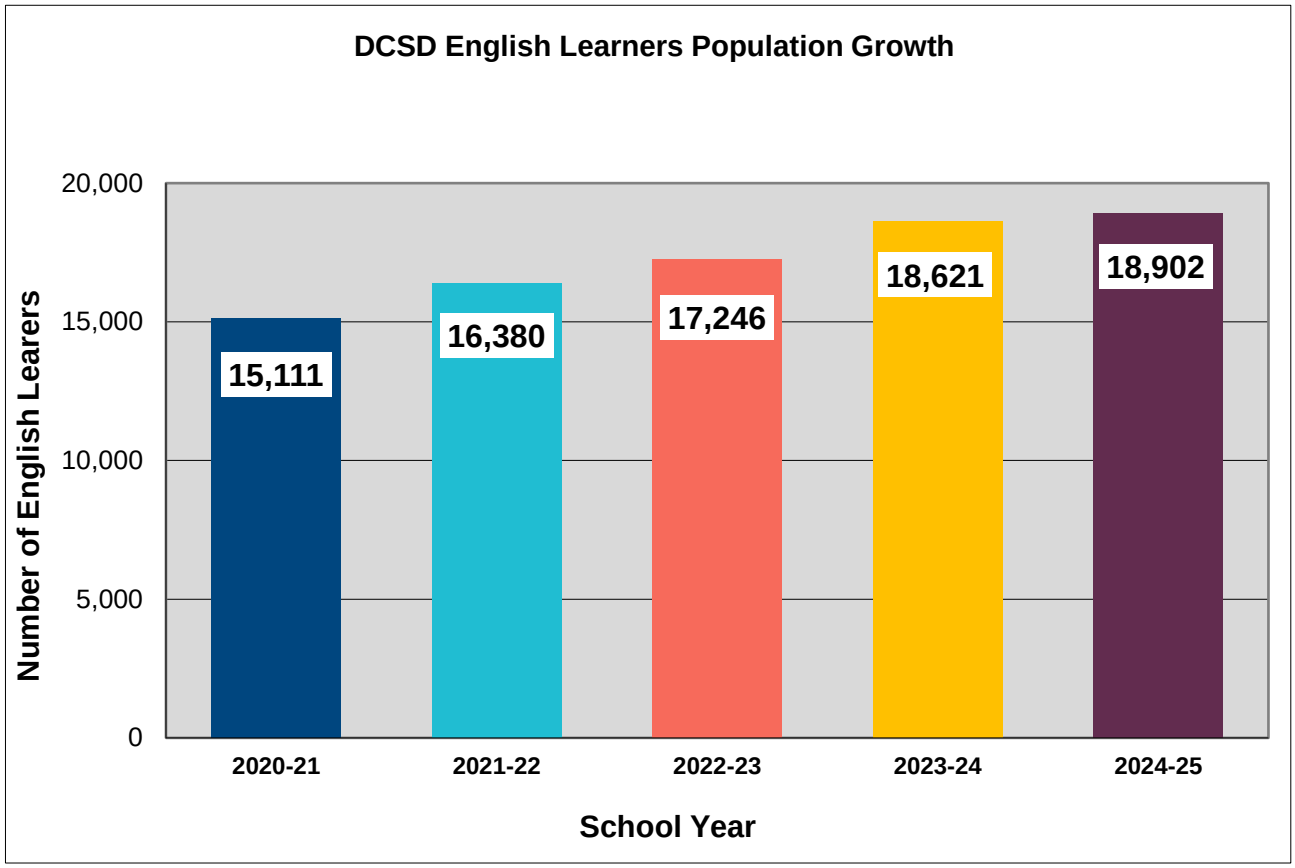


Figure 3. DCSD Active English Learners Student Population

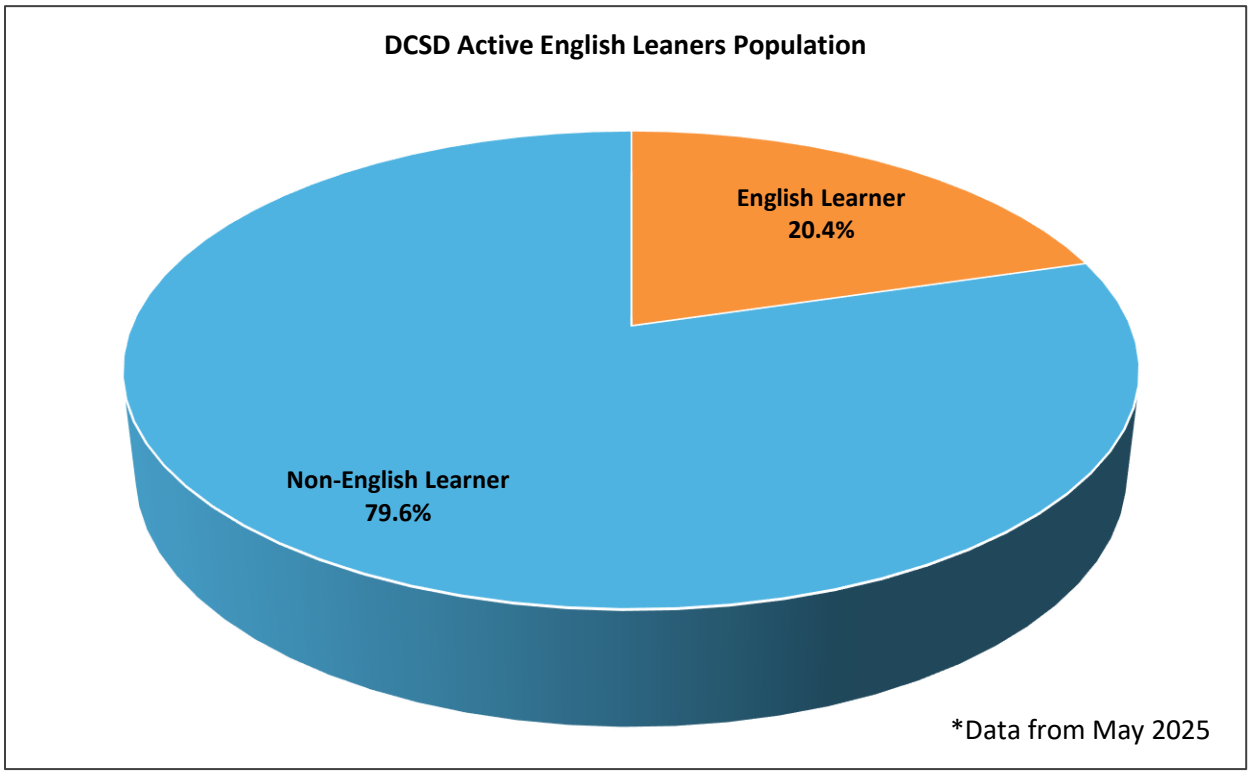


Table 2. Top 10 Countries Represented by English Learners in DCSD

Top 10 Countries (English Learners)		
Country	**Students**	**Percent of Total EL Student Population**
Guatemala	2236	14.0%
Mexico	1554	9.7%
Afghanistan	1423	8.9%
Honduras	1151	7.2%
Venezuela	1013	6.3%
India	747	4.7%
Ethiopia	673	4.2%
Congo, The Republic of the	558	3.5%
Myanmar (Burma)	517	3.2%
Jamaica	414	2.6%

*Data from May 2025

Figure 4. English Learners in DCSD by Ethnicity

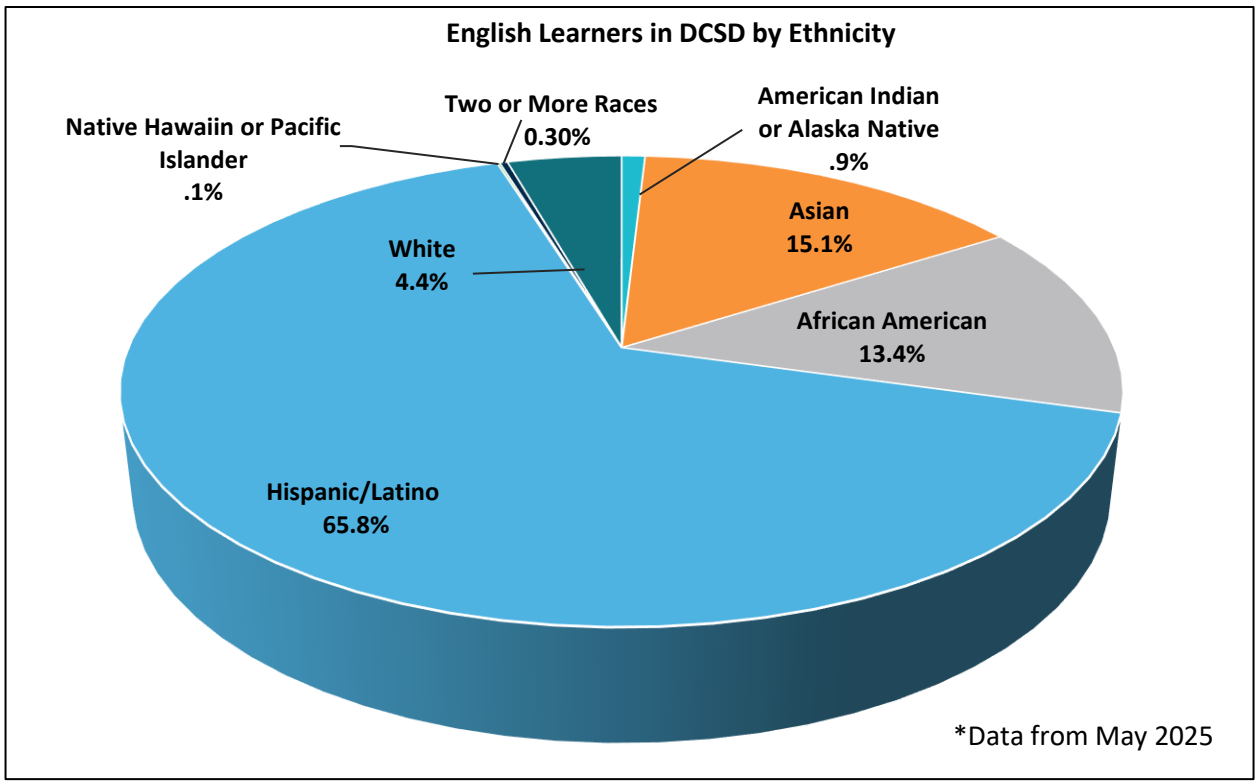
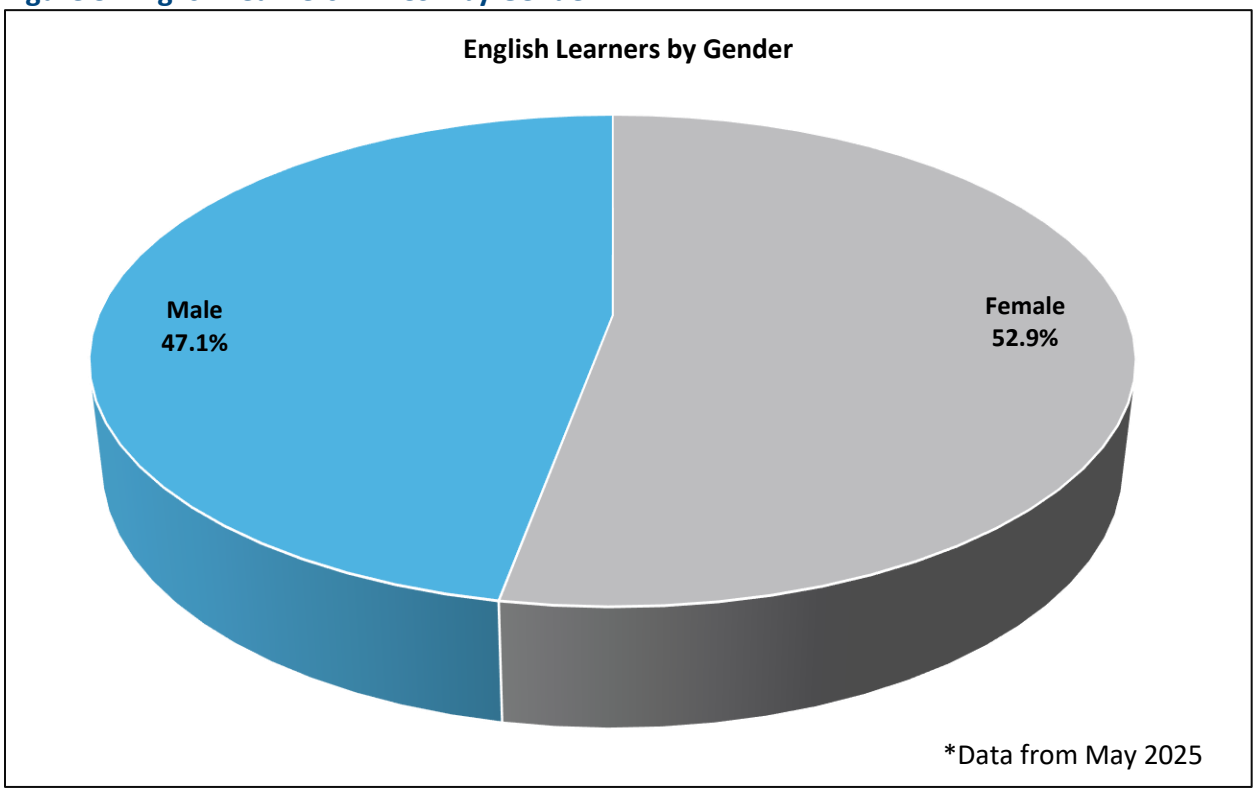


Figure 5. English Learners in DCSD by Gender



DCSD serves a growing number of students whose Primary Home Language is Other Than English (PHLOTE). PHLOTE students are identified based on responses on the Home Language Survey. The chart below shows PHLOTE student population growth in DCSD since 2021.

Figure 6. DCSD PHLOTE Population Growth

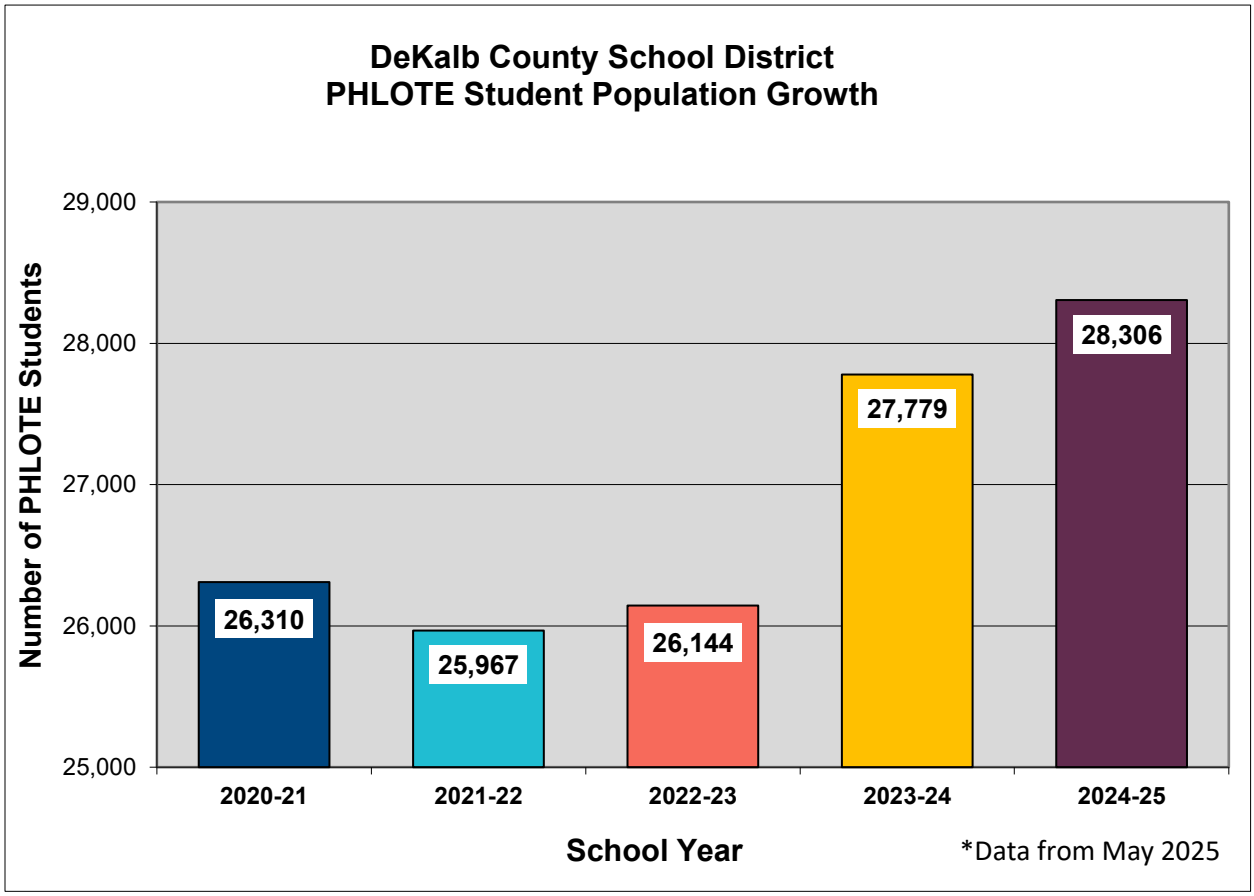


Figure 7. DCSD PHLOTE versus Non-PHLOTE Students

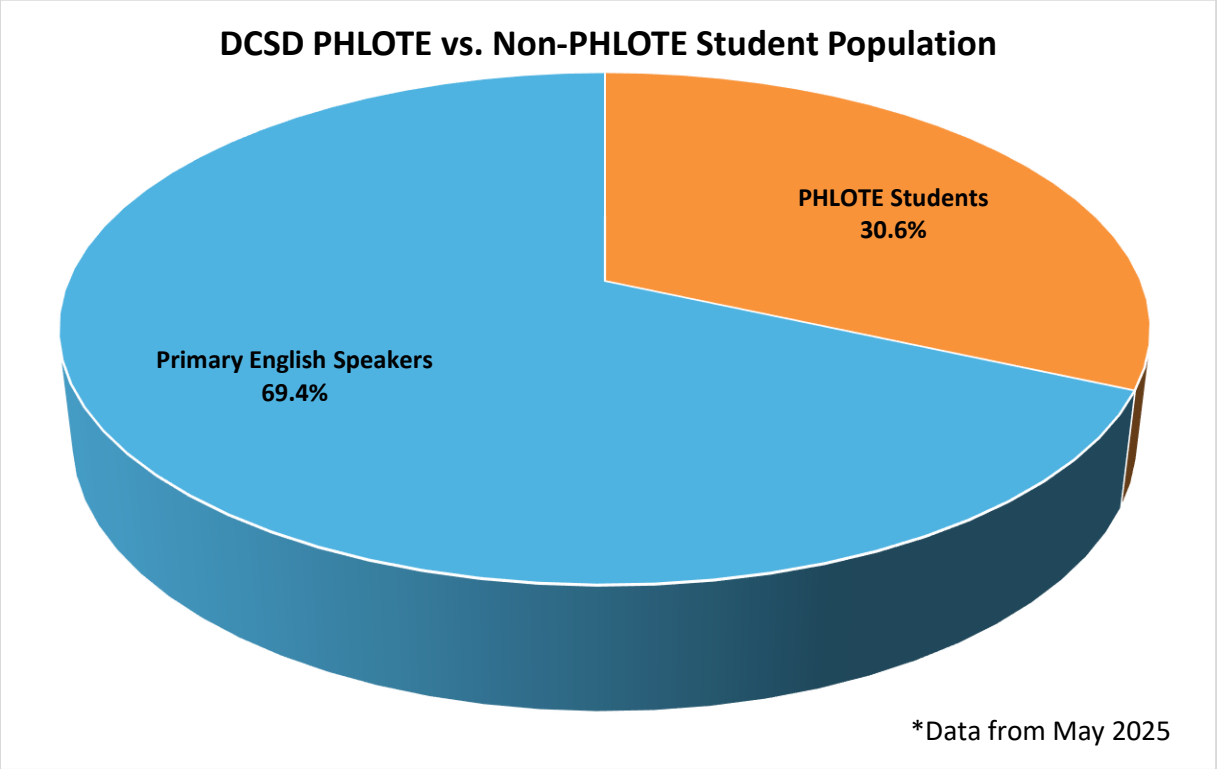


Table 3. Top 10 PHLOTE Languages in DCSD

Top 10 PHLOTE Languages		
Language	**Students**	**Percent of PHLOTE Students**
Spanish	17,178	60.7%
Amharic	1,162	4.1%
Swahili	994	3.5%
Dari	792	2.8%
Burmese, Hakka Chin	784	2.2%
Arabic	626	2.2%
Pashto/Pashtu	485	1.7%
Karen	423	1.5%
Bengali	376	1.3%
Nepali	357	1.3%

*Data from May 2025

DCSD serves an increasing sub-group of English learners identified as refugees. The Georgia Department of Public Health cites the Refugee Act of 1980 in defining refugees as persons who are outside of and unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of the home country because of persecution or fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. DCSD is committed to meeting the educational needs of these students as part of our English Learners Master Plan.

Figure 8. DCSD Refugee Student Population Growth

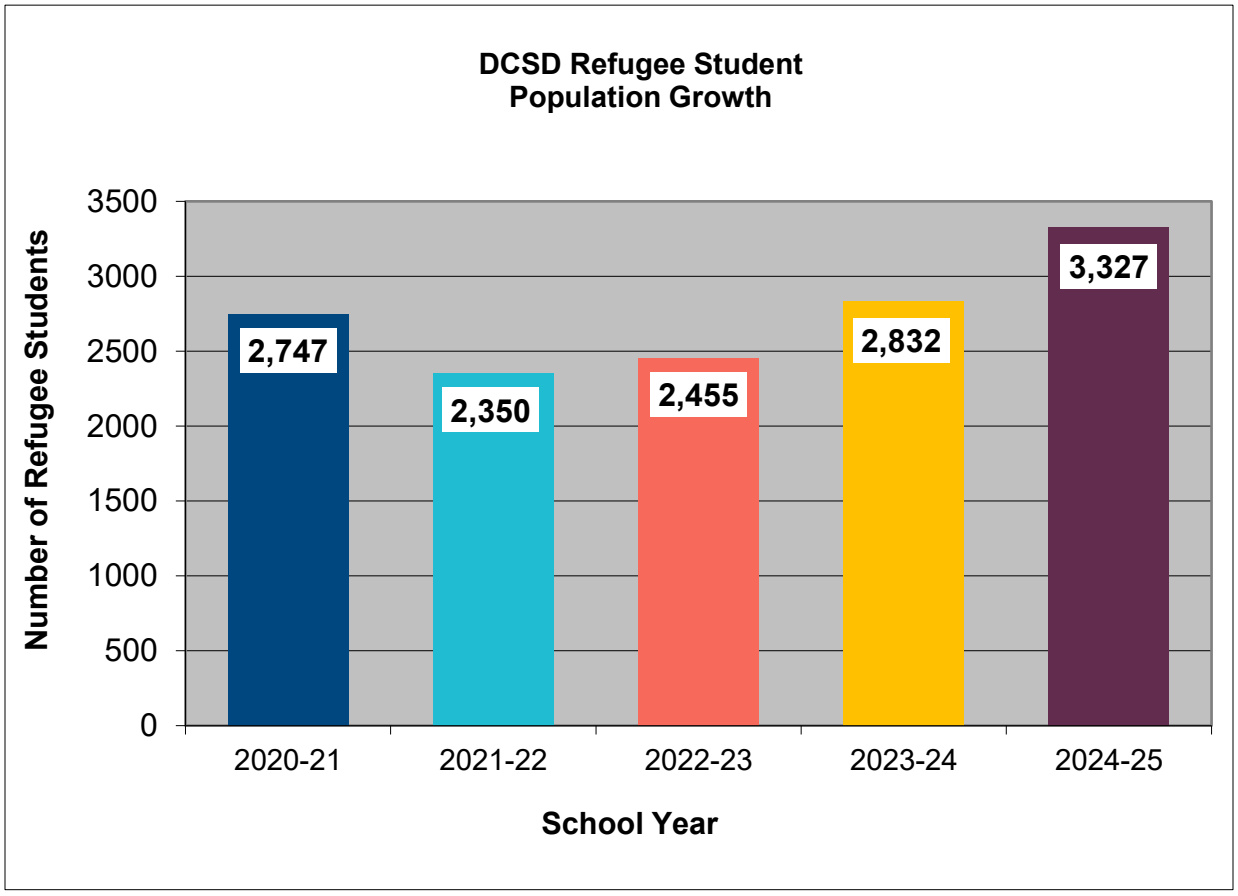


Figure 9. DCSD Refugee Student Population

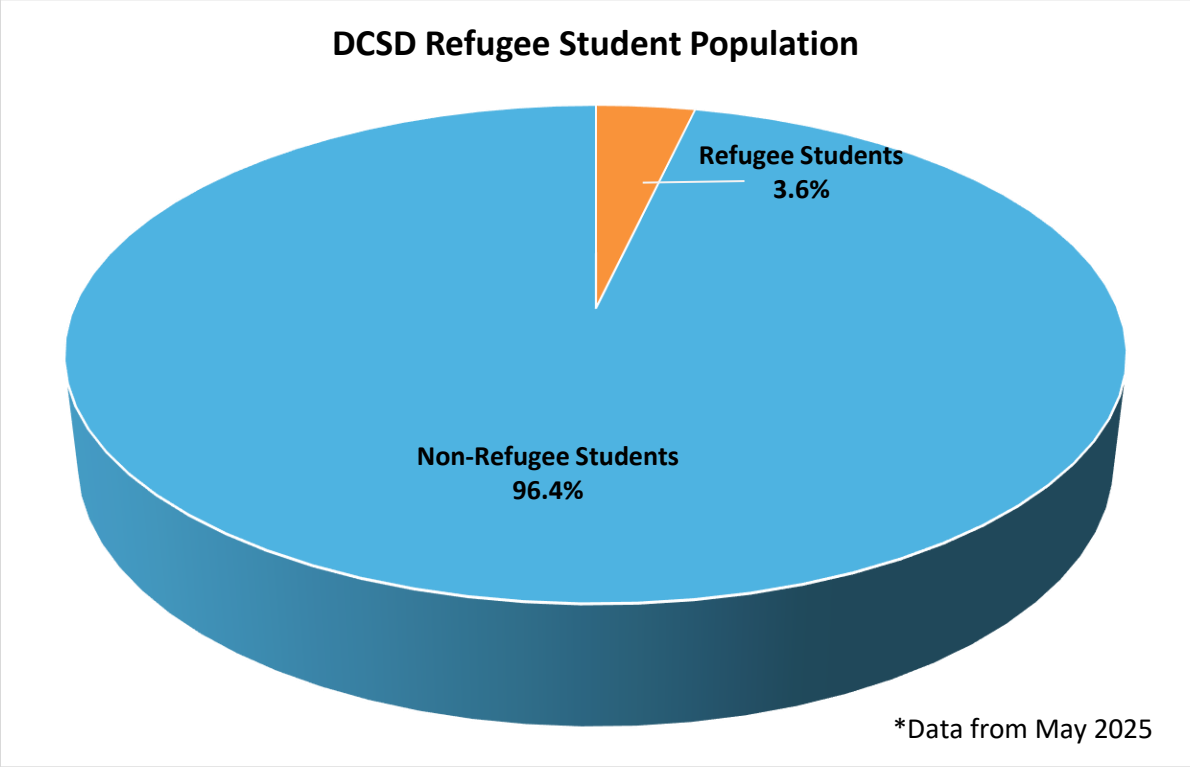
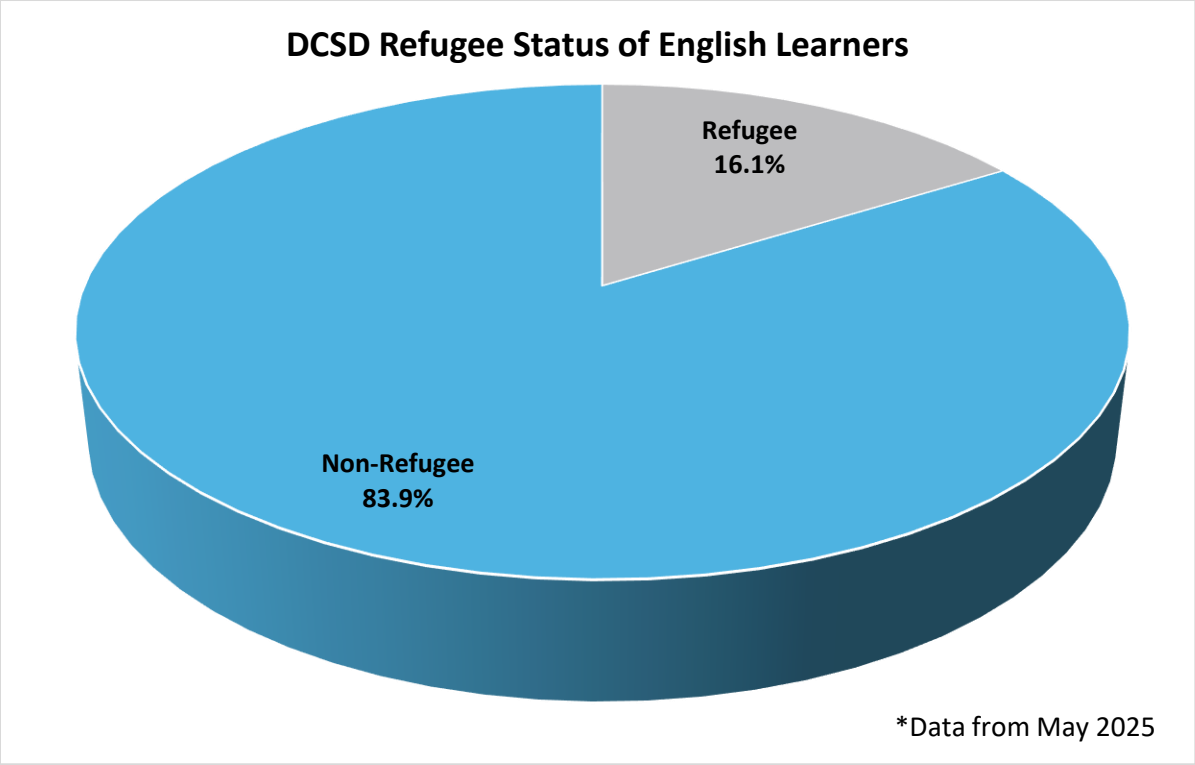


Figure 10. DCSD Refugee Status of English Learners



RATIONALE FOR THE DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH LEARNERS MASTER PLAN

The WIDA ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency assessment administered to students in grades K-12 who are English learners. The assessment is given once a year in the Spring semester to monitor their English language development. The levels of English proficiency range from Entering (1.0-1.9) to Bridging (5.0-5.9). Figure 11 shows DCSD English learners' language proficiency performance by grade level in 2024. Most kindergarten and first grade English learners begin their English language journey at the Entering level.

Figure 11. Distribution of English Proficiency Levels by Grade Level, 2024

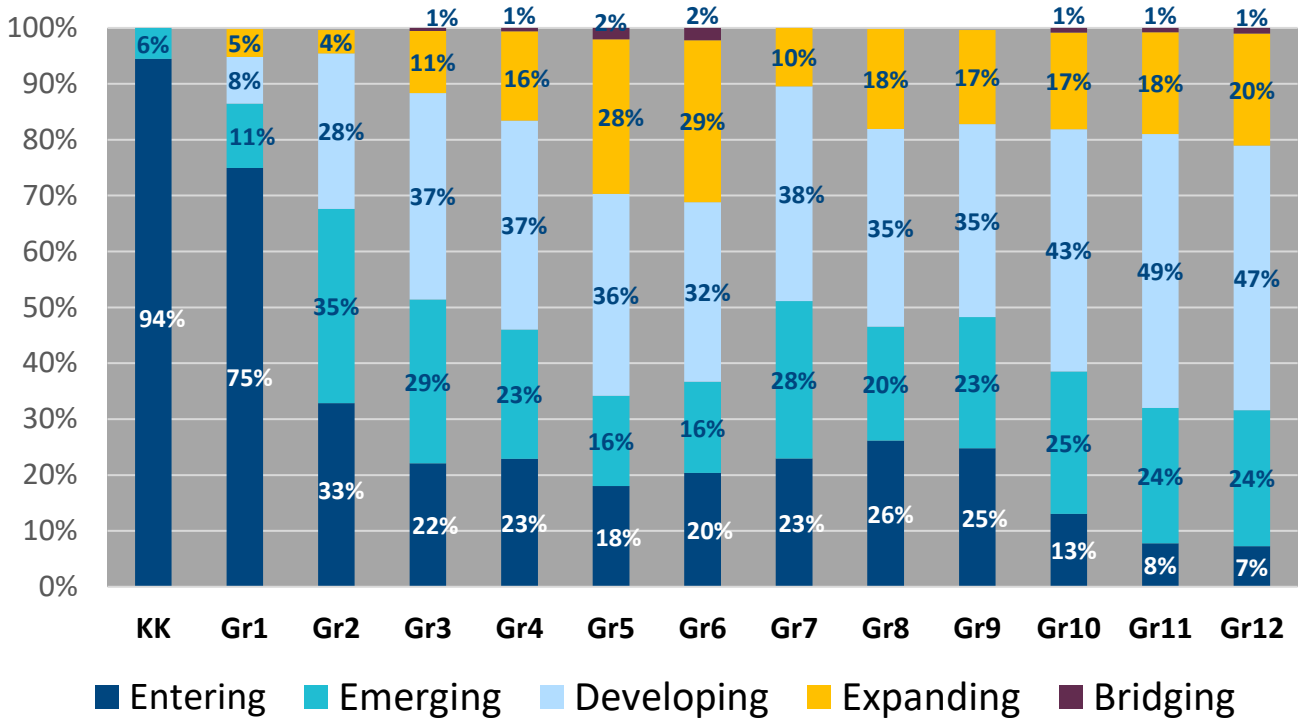


Table 4 compares the achievement levels of *Current ELs* to *Never ELs* from 2021-22 through 2023-24. The data show that a significantly higher percentage of *Current ELs* scored below proficient in math, ELA, and science compared to *Never ELs.*

Table 5 compares the achievement levels of *Former ELs* to *Never ELs* from 2021-22 through 2023-24. These data indicate that in elementary school, a significantly lower percentage of *Former ELs* scored below proficient in math, ELA, and science compared to *Never ELs*. The same outcome is observed in middle school math and ELA. In 2023-24, a significantly lower percentage of *Former ELs* scored below proficient in math compared to *Never ELs.*

Table 4. Comparing GA Milestones by EL Status, Current ELs vs Never ELs 2021-22 to 2023-24

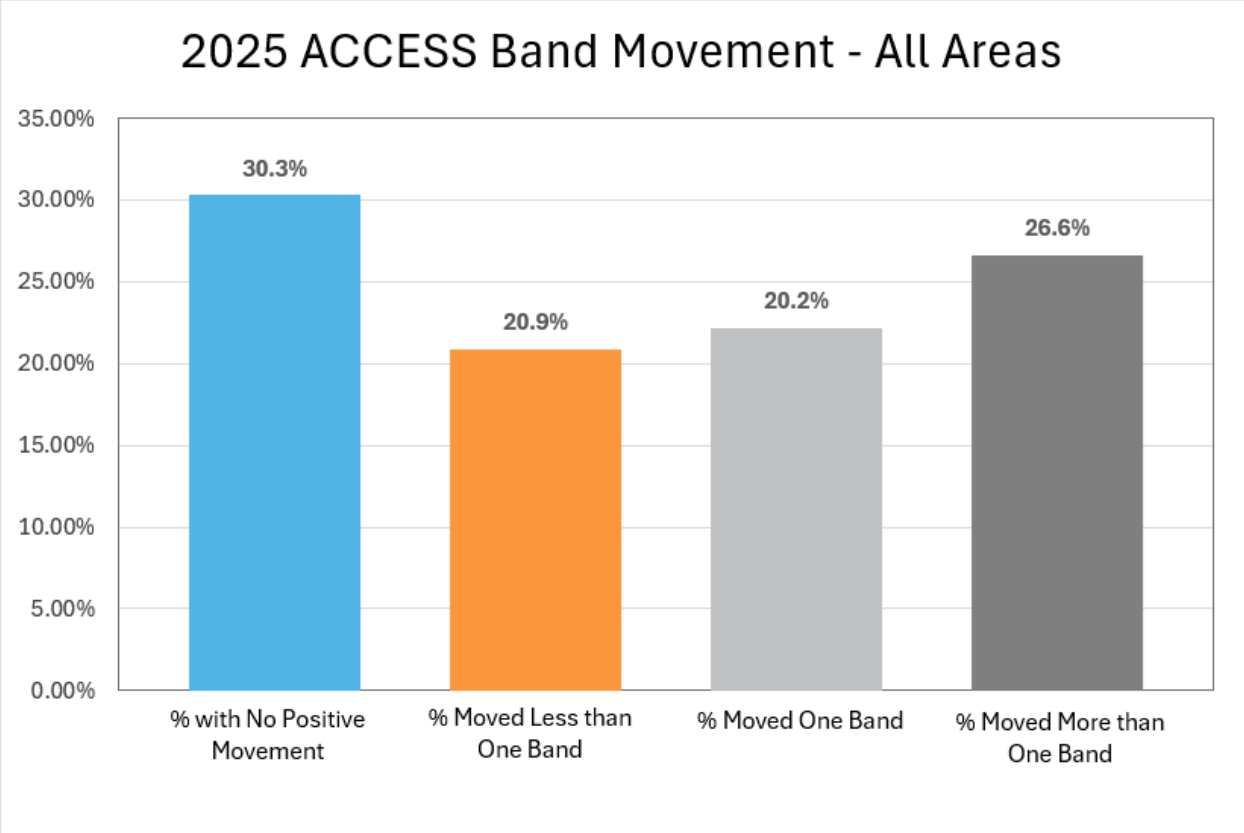
Achievement Level: Percent Below Proficient	School Year	Current ELs vs Never ELs		
		Elementary (n=57)	Middle School (n=17)	High School (n=20)
Math	2021-22	83 > 70	95 > 78	98 > 78
	2022-23	81 > 66	94 > 78	94 > 83
	2023-24	81 > 64	93 > 76	91 > 81
ELA	2021-22	84 > 66	92 > 69	92 > 63
	2022-23	81 > 66	94 > 78	94> 83
	2023-24	85 > 61	90 > 64	97 > 62
Science	2021-22	88 >71	92 > 76	92 > 65
	2022-23	88 >70	95 > 79	95 > 63
	2023-24	90 > 66	94 > 77	88 > 63
	Indicates *Current EL* students performed statistically significantly lower than *Never EL* students.			

Table 5. Comparing GA Milestones by EL Status, Former ELs vs Never ELs 2021-22 to 2023-24

Achievement level: Percent below proficient	School Year	Former ELs (FEL) vs Never ELs		
		Elementary (n=48)	Middle School (n=17)	High School (n=19)
Math	2021-22	35 < 70	67 < 78	63 < 78
	2022-23	40 < 66	68 < 78	74 < 83
	2023-24	33 < 64	59 < 76	67 < 81
ELA	2021-22	21 < 66	49 < 69	64 > 63
	2022-23	40 < 66	68 < 78	74 < 83
	2023-24	18 < 61	43 < 64	68 > 62
Science	2021-22	32 < 71	62 < 76	64 < 65
	2022-23	38 < 70	68 < 79	50 < 63
	2023-24	41 < 66	62 < 77	59 < 63
	Indicates *Former EL* students performed statistically significantly better than *Never EL* students.			

Figure 12 shows ACCESS band movement for DCSD English learners in 2025. It is noteworthy that nearly 50% of ELs moved at least one band, and roughly 70% of ELs showed positive band movement while 30.3% showed no positive band movement.

Figure 12. English Learners ACCESS Band Movement – All Areas (2025)



The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) allows school districts the flexibility to establish English learner program exit criteria. The 2024-2025 school year marks a change in exit criteria for DCSD students in grades 1-12. To be considered for reclassification through the DCSD process, these students, including graduating seniors, must meet the reclassification criteria of a composite proficiency level (CPL) of 4.3 to 4.9 on the WIDA ACCESS 2.0, whereas in previous years these students had to meet additional criteria. This exit criterion is termed Reclassification Criteria which differs from a Clear Exit that requires a 5.0 CPL. Exit criteria for English learners in kindergarten remain the same.

Figure 13 shows the percentage of English learners with Clear Exit and Reclassification Exit status for 2024 and 2025. There were nearly 2% more Reclassification Exits in 2025 than in the previous school year, and overall, more students exited in 2025 compared to 2024.

Figure 14 shows that on average, Former ELs outperformed Current ELs and Never ELs on the graduation rate indicator from 2021-22 through 2023-24.

Figure 13. ACCESS – English Learners Exit Comparison

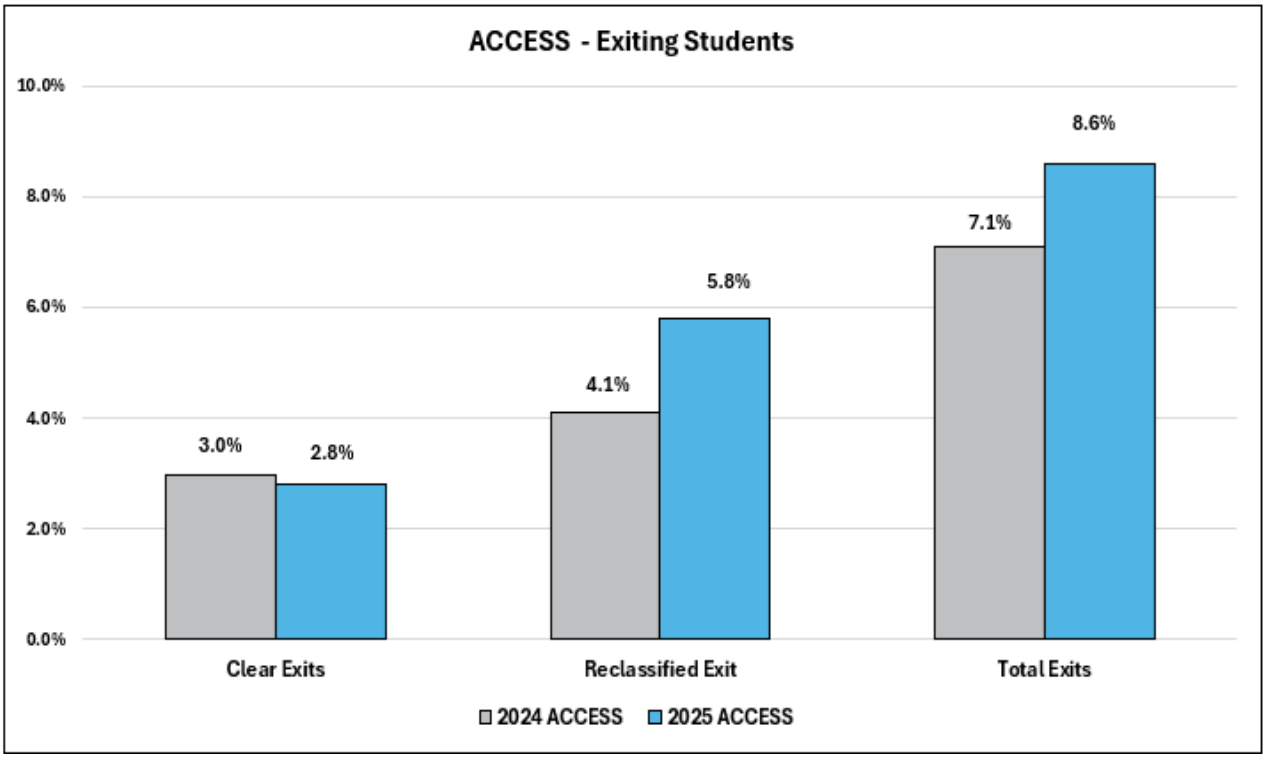
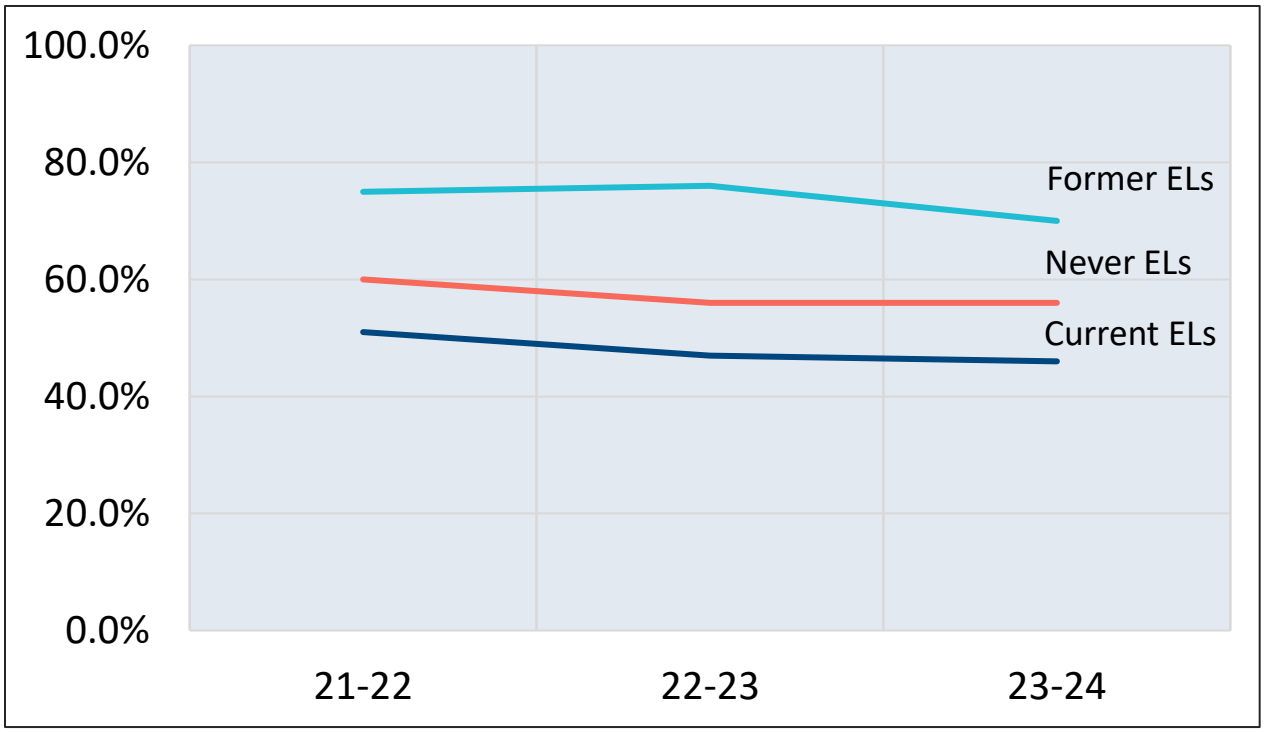


Figure 14. Average Graduation Rate by English Learners (EL) Status, 2021-22 to 2023-24



SUMMARY OF PHASE 1: ENGLISH LEARNERS PROGRAM EVALUATION

During Phase 1, RMC conducted an evaluation to inform recommendations for improving district policies and school practices related to educating ELs. The evaluation covered a review of the major areas of the English Learners program:

- Identification, Placement, Monitoring, & Exiting of ELs;
- Staffing & Professional Learning for EL Teachers;
- Instructional Models;
- Curriculum & Instructional Materials;
- Assessment & Accountability (Evaluate the effectiveness of the DCSD ESOL program);
- Communication with PHLOTE families; and
- Addressing ELs with Disabilities.

The review applied the following process to each of the major areas: (1) review of district documentation on current policies and practices, (2) analysis of data, and (3) description and summary of recommendations for strengthening EL policies and practices in DCSD.

The process drew on information and data from a variety of sources, including documentation provided by the district with information about policies and practices, focus groups (school/district leaders), electronic surveys (teacher/principal), classroom observations, and student demographic information and achievement and language proficiency results. The evaluation of the district's current policies and practices was described in a draft evaluation report submitted to the DCSD English Learners Department on February 5, and the findings informed the EL Master Plan development completed during Phase 2.

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

November – December 2024	December 2024 – January 2025	January – February 2025
• Student, School, and District-Level Data • Teacher and School Leader Surveys	• Classroom Observations • Parent/Student Focus Group • Principal and District Focus Groups	• Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data • Preparation of Evaluation Report

SUMMARY OF PHASE 2: DEVELOPING THE DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH LEARNERS MASTER PLAN

Developing the DCSD English Learners Master Plan was an intensive process involving reflection, discussion, deliberation, and consensus among DCSD stakeholders. RMC Research Corporation led the district through the process of developing the English Learners Master Plan through a series of three two-day work sessions from February through April 2025. Each work session is described in detail below.

Work Session 1: February 11-12, 2025

RMC met on-site to collaborate with DCSD EL Department staff and stakeholders (Stakeholder Committee) in reviewing and reflecting on results from the district's EL program evaluation. During this session, RMC staff presented data to the Stakeholder Committee identified by DCSD staff (e.g., principals, district leadership, counselors, and Horizons EL Coordinators). In groups, stakeholders had the opportunity to observe data sets, infer their implications, and identify needs and priorities in alignment with the GADOE legal requirements for serving ELs. Prior to Work Session 2, RMC held virtual meetings to provide technical assistance with interim assignments, including preparing a presentation on the status of the work for the DCSD March board meeting.

Work Session 2: March 10-11, 2025

RMC met on-site with the Stakeholder Committee to develop strategic goals to address needs identified during Work Session 1. They reviewed and reflected on evidence-based resources related to their goals, including current literature on effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices for ELs. They also reviewed research on professional learning systems and policy considerations to build their capacity to design an effective EL Master Plan. On day two, RMC facilitated the development of a theory of action, which entailed making connections between identified goals, high-leverage strategies, and intended outcomes. Prior to Work Session 3, RMC held virtual meetings with the DCSD English Learners Department to provide technical assistance with interim assignments.

Work Session 3: April 15-16, 2025

RMC led the Stakeholder Committee in developing other key components of the English Learners Master Plan, including crafting vision and mission statements through consensus and describing key departmental principles to meet the needs of ELs. Stakeholders developed these components in alignment to the DCSD Strategic Plan. To effectively execute the EL Master Plan, RMC guided the Stakeholder Committee in developing an implementation action plan aligned with the theory of action. The implementation action plan describes how high-leverage strategies will be addressed through key action steps and tasks, a timeline for completing those steps, staff roles and responsibilities, and an evaluation component to monitor progress of the English Learners Master Plan. Prior to beginning Phase 3, RMC held virtual meetings with the DCSD English Learners Department to provide guidance.

SUMMARY OF PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING, AND FINAL REPORTING OF THE ENGLISH LEARNERS MASTER PLAN

Transitioning from Phase 2 to Phase 3 entailed synthesizing and refining each component of the English Learners Master Plan developed by the DCSD Stakeholder Committee during Phase 2 then compiling the components into a master template for publishing.

Phase 3 was grounded in continuous improvement and implementation. On May 13, the RMC team provided evidence-based resources and guidance to the district English Learners Department staff to train and support them in developing and implementing a communication plan. The guidance helped the EL team identify key messaging and appropriate communication strategies for both internal and external stakeholders.

By the end of Phase 3, RMC finalized the findings of the Evaluation Report and presented recommendations in preparation for publication of the English Learners Master Plan.

PRIORITY STATEMENTS

The DCSD Stakeholder Committee identified five critical priority areas based on all available data. These priorities were developed into statements intended to capture the essential elements for DCSD in developing and reaching its goals in service of its English learners population. They also align with the Georgia Department of Education's ESOL Language Program – Local Education Agency (LEA) Legal Obligations (Table 6).

1. **A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum** aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success.
2. **Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning** for all staff who serve English learners.
3. **Improve communication** mechanisms and channels for all stakeholders**.**
4. **Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive** of all student support areas.
5. **Improve opportunities for EL parents** to collaborate and communicate with school and district staff.

ALIGNMENT WITH GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S TEN LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Table 6. Alignment of LEA Legal Obligations with DeKalb County School District English Learners Department Priorities

English to Speakers of Other Languages Program LEA Legal Obligations	DeKalb County School District English Learners Department Priorities
1. Identify and screen all potential EL students in a timely, valid, and reliable manner.	• Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4)
2. Provide EL students with an educationally sound and successful ESOL program.	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4)

3. Ensure ELs have equal opportunities to participate meaningfully in curricular and extra-curricular activities.	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Improve communication mechanisms and channels for all stakeholders. (Priority Statement 3) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4) • Improve opportunities for EL parents to collaborate and communicate with school and district staff. (Priority Statement 5)
4. Meet the needs of EL students whose parents opt them out of ESOL.	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality targeted focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4) • Improve opportunities for EL parents to collaborate and communicate with school and district staff. (Priority Statement 5)
5. Provide prepared and trained ESOL teachers and staff.	• Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4)

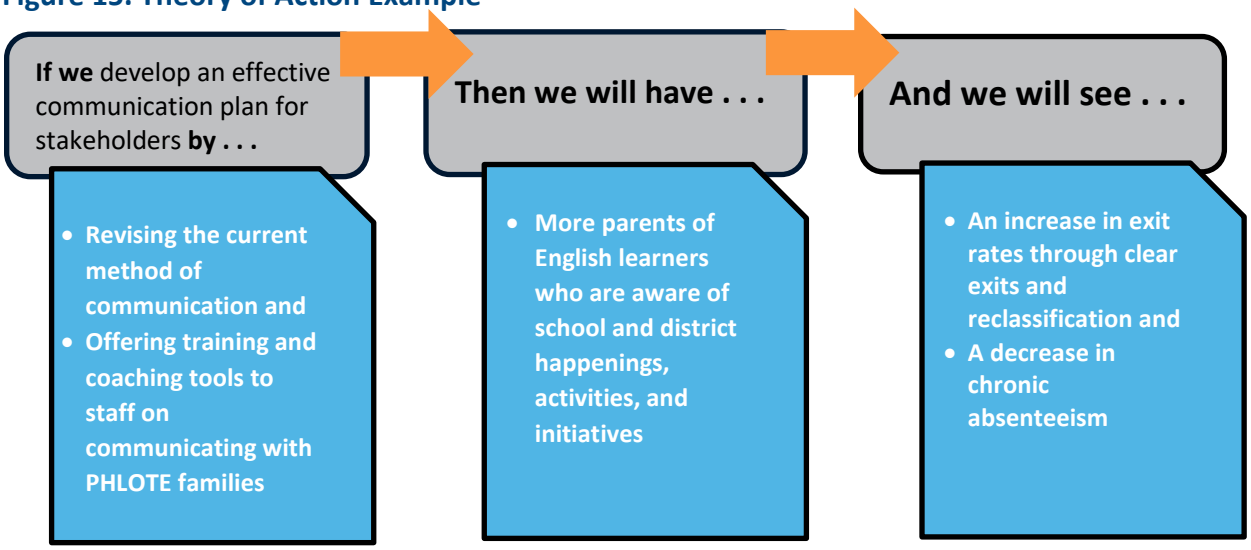
6. Avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students (i.e., Sheltered and Pull-Out Models).	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Improve communication mechanisms and channels for all stakeholders. (Priority Statement 3).
7. Ensure meaningful communication with EL parents.	• Improve communication mechanisms and channels for all stakeholders. (Priority Statement 3) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4) • Improve opportunities for EL parents to collaborate and communicate with school and district staff. (Priority Statement 5)
8. Ensure that EL students who have or are suspected of having a disability under IDEA or Section 504 are identified, located, and evaluated in a timely manner and that their language needs are considered in evaluation and services.	• Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4)
9. Monitor and evaluate EL students' progress in English and academic grade-level knowledge; Exit them when they are proficient in English; and Monitor exited students to ensure they were not prematurely exited.	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4)

10. Evaluate the effectiveness of the LEA's ESOL Program to ensure EL students acquire English and that the program is reasonably calculated to allow ELs to attain parity of participation in the standard instructional program with a reasonable time period.	• A guaranteed, viable, and appropriate curriculum aligned with the Georgia Department of Education standards that gives access for all English learners for student success. (Priority Statement 1) • Expand and monitor the impact of high-quality, targeted ESOL focused professional learning for all staff who serve English learners. (Priority Statement 2) • Improve communication mechanisms and channels for all stakeholders. (Priority Statement 3) • Ensure that collaborative processes are equitable and inclusive of all student support areas. (Priority Statement 4) • Improve opportunities for EL parents to collaborate and communicate with school and district staff. (Priority Statement 5)

THEORY OF ACTION

The English Learners Department and Stakeholder Committee developed a theory of action to affect change in services and practices for improving outcomes for ELs. A theory of action uses "if-then" statements to illustrate how a set of goals and strategies leads to intended outcomes. See Figure 15 for a depiction of the process. It begins with proposing goals and high-leverage strategies for meeting those goals (if we . . . by) which leads to positive outcomes (then we will have . . .) and culminates in measurable student achievement (and we will see . . .).

Figure 15. Theory of Action Example



To begin the process of developing the Theory of Action, the Stakeholder Committee identified the five goals below from the ESOL program evaluation findings and critical priority areas. Stakeholders ensured alignment with the DCSD Six Systems (See Appendix B). Following the goals is the detailed Theory of Action for the English Learners Master Plan.

Five Goals

1. Facilitate comprehensive implementation of high-quality curriculum and supplemental materials aligned with GA Standards that support the academic success of all English learners (ELs).
2. Provide tailored, high-quality professional learning to meet the needs of teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff for the benefit of all ELs.
3. Develop and implement effective and timely two-way communication processes for all school and district staff, families, and other stakeholders for the benefit of all ELs.
4. Develop and implement quality organizational systems and collaborative processes that support all ELs.
5. Increase meaningful collaboration and support active engagement with Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) families for student success.

DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT THEORY OF ACTION FOR THE ENGLISH LEARNERS MASTER PLAN

1. IF WE facilitate comprehensive implementation of **high-quality curriculum and supplemental materials** aligned with GA Standards that support the academic success of all English Learners (ELs) **by**:

- Developing additional high-quality English language development curriculum that is appropriate for all ELs including SLIFE, LTELs, Newcomers, etc.,
- Providing initial and ongoing training and support on the effective use of the curriculum and resources to support ELs, preparing staff to deliver purposefully scaffolded instruction informed by student needs, and targeted instruction to high expectations aligned with different ESOL delivery models,
- Building capacity for staff to deliver instruction that is purposefully scaffolded, informed by student needs and targeted to high expectations,
- Collaborating with content area departments to ensure targeted DCSD curricula are aligned to Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) and include instructional materials that support intellectual engagement and language development of all ELs,

2. AND IF WE provide tailored **high-quality professional learning** to meet the needs of teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff for the benefit of ELs **by**:

- Designing and developing training for teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff on research-based practices to support ELs' language development and academic achievement,
- Establishing a system for implementing and monitoring professional learning for teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff supporting ELs,
- Building the capacity of teachers and administrators serving ELs on instructional frameworks and delivery models.

3. AND IF WE develop and implement effective and timely **two-way communication processes** for all school and district staff, families, and other stakeholders for the benefit of ELs **by**:

- Providing adequate and consistent training for school leadership regarding communication protocols,
- Establishing a Standard Operating Procedure for two-way communication,
- Monitoring the current process in place to support the communication protocol,
- Recruiting more interpreters to support schools through high-quality translation and interpretation services for all district-wide events and family meetings,

4. AND IF WE develop and implement **quality organizational systems and collaborative processes** that support all ELs **by**:

- Identifying a team of district and school-level personnel to create and implement organizational systems and remove barriers that impact ELs,
- Prioritizing the changes that need to be made and revising the systems and processes to serve ELs better,

5. AND IF WE increase **meaningful collaboration and support active engagement with EL families** for student success **by**:

- Developing ambassador programs at all local schools,
- Intentionally inviting parents of ELs to school based organizations and offering language and other support for shared decision making,
- Establishing satellite locations within the community for school organizations/meetings,
- Creating/offering family sessions throughout the year providing guidance and support navigating the educational system,

THEN WE WILL HAVE:

- More standards-aligned classrooms that integrate content and English language development and engage ELs.
- More teachers prepared to support ELs throughout the day using the curriculum and materials.
- More materials and resources that are effective in supporting ELs.
- More teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff prepared to provide support to ELs.
- More teachers implementing research-based instructional strategies for supporting ELs.
- Increased teacher, administrator, counselor, and clerical staff capacity for supporting ELs.
- More effective communication with families, resulting in increased support and achievement of students.
- More parents of ELs who are aware of school and district happenings, activities and initiatives.
- Increased family participation in parent-teacher conferences, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and school events.
- Semester audits conducted by the district to evaluate school adherence to communication protocols.
- Improved family participation and engagement in school activities.
- Cross-functional planning structures at the district and school levels to support ELs' needs.
- Asset-oriented district-wide system where all educators share responsibilities for supporting and sustaining ELs' academic and linguistic development.
- More families engaged in events, meetings, and shared decision-making.
- More families accessing resources and school-based systems.
- More two way communication between families and school to access families' funds of knowledge.

THEN WE WILL see an increase in:

- Exit rate through clear exits and reclassification
- Participation in Gifted Program
- Participation in AP classes
- Access to qualified ESOL teachers
- Four-year EL graduation rate
- College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores

And decreases in:

- Number and percent of long-term English learners
- Chronic Absenteeism

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN: GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND TIMELINE

Goal 1: Facilitate comprehensive implementation of high-quality curriculum and supplemental materials aligned with GA Standards that support the academic success of all English learners (ELs).

Action Steps and Timeline

Action Steps	Completion Date			
	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27	Year 4 2027-28
High-Leverage Strategy 1.1 Develop additional high-quality English language development curriculum that is appropriate for targeted subgroups of ELs (including SLIFE, LTELs, Newcomers, etc.).				
1.1.1 Conduct a needs assessment for targeted EL subgroups.		2025 Oct-Dec		
1.1.2 Assemble a diverse curriculum development team.		2025 Oct-Dec		
1.1.3 Develop or curate differentiated English Language Development (ELD) curriculum materials or align resources to mandated DCSD curriculum.		March 2026 Ongoing		
1.1.4 Provide professional learning and ongoing support.			July 2026 Ongoing	
1.1.5 Pilot the curriculum with targeted student groups.			SY 2026-2027	
High-Leverage Strategy 1.2 Provide initial and ongoing training and support the effective use of the curriculum and resources to support ELs, preparing staff to deliver purposefully scaffolded instruction informed by student needs, and targeted instruction to high expectations aligned with different ESOL delivery models.				
1.2.1 Identify training needs based on ESOL delivery models and staff roles.				2027 Jul-Sept

1.2.2 Develop and deliver initial professional development on scaffolded instruction.				2027 Jul-Sept
1.2.3 Facilitate collaborative planning to integrate EL supports into core instruction.				2027 Jul-Sept
High-Leverage Strategy 1.3 Build capacity for staff to deliver instruction that is purposefully scaffolded, informed by student needs and targeted to high expectations.				
1.3.1 Provide foundational training on scaffolding strategies (e.g., modeling, sentence frames, visuals, leveled questioning) for ELs.				2027 Jul-Sept
1.3.2 Implement data-informed instructional planning protocols.				2027 Oct-Dec
1.3.3 Conduct training sessions with a focus on high expectations and access.				2028 Jan-June
1.3.4 Establish peer collaboration through professional learning communities (PLCs) or learning walks.				2028 Jan-June
High-Leverage Strategy 1.4 Collaborate with content area departments to ensure targeted DCSD curricula are aligned to GSE and include instructional materials that support intellectual engagement and language development of all ELs.				
1.4.1 Conduct curriculum alignment reviews with content area teams.		July 2025 Ongoing		
1.4.2 Integrate language development goals into content area units.		Oct 2025 Ongoing		
1.4.3 Provide cross-departmental professional learning on language-rich instruction.		Jan 2026 Ongoing		

The implementation of these high-leverage strategies and related action steps will lead to the achievement of implementation outcomes and long-term impacts:

Implementation Outcomes:

- More standards-aligned classrooms that integrate content and English language development and engage ELs
- More teachers prepared to support ELs throughout the day using the curriculum and materials
- More materials and resources that are effective in supporting ELs

Long-Term Impacts:

Increases in:

- College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores
- Exit rate through clear exits and reclassification
- Participation in Gifted Program
- Participation in AP classes
- Four-year EL graduation rate

And a decrease in:

- Number and percent of long-term English learners

Implementation Leads	Resources, Partners, and Staffing	Recommended Positions
• EL Senior Coordinator (Proposed) • EL Coordinator II • EL Professional Learning Coordinator (Proposed) • ESOL Specialist	• Area EL Coordinator • Student Support Services partners (SWD & Gifted) • ESOL Lead Teachers • Stipend funding (TBD) • External curriculum developer (TBD)	• Additional ESOL Specialists • Additional ESOL teachers for sheltered courses • EL Senior Coordinator • EL Professional Learning Coordinator

Goal 2: Provide tailored, high-quality professional learning to meet the needs of teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff for the benefit of all ELs.

Action Steps and Timeline

Action Steps	Completion Date			
	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27	Year 4 2027-28
High-Leverage Strategy 2.1 Design and develop training for teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff on research-based practices to support ELs' language development and academic achievement.				
2.1.1 Identify strengths and collaboration opportunities within the EL Department and Area EL Coordinators to deliver targeted professional learning.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
2.1.2 Develop a data-driven needs assessment to design targeted professional learning opportunities for teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff to meet local school needs. Use CCRPI (or most recent) data to identify needs in combination with learning walks.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
High-Leverage Strategy 2.2 Establish a system for implementing and monitoring professional learning for teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff supporting ELs.				
2.2.1 Design a professional learning cycle that includes local needs assessment, coaching, professional development, a monitoring cycle, and follow-up.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
High-Leverage Strategy 2.3 Build the capacity of teachers and administrators serving ELs on instructional frameworks and delivery models.				
2.3.1 Create a resource bank of video and materials utilizing exemplars from DCSD.		Oct 2025 Ongoing		
2.3.2 Provide access to the resource bank through the EL Department SharePoint site.		Aug-Sept 2025		
2.3.3 Develop an ongoing schedule between the EL Department and Area EL Coordinators to identify needs and provide PL.	June 2025 Ongoing			

The implementation of these high-leverage strategies and related action steps will lead to the achievement of implementation outcomes and long-term impacts:

Implementation Outcomes:

- More teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff prepared to provide support to ELs
- More teachers implementing research-based instructional strategies for supporting ELs
- Increased teacher, administrator, counselor, and clerical staff capacity for supporting ELs

Long-Term Impacts:

Increases in:

- Exit rate through clear exits and reclassification
- Access to ESOL endorsed/qualified teachers
- College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores
- Four-year EL graduation rate

And a decrease in:

- Number and percent of long-term English learners

Implementation Leads

- **EL Senior Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **EL Coordinator II**
- **EL Professional Learning Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **ESOL Specialist**
- **ESOL Compliance Specialist (Proposed)**

Resources, Partners, and Staffing

- **Area EL Coordinator**
- **Student Support Services partners (SWD & Gifted)**
- **ESOL Lead Teachers**

Recommended Positions

- **Additional ESOL Specialists**
- **ESOL Compliance Specialist**

Goal 3: Develop and implement effective and timely two-way communication processes for all school and district staff, families, and other stakeholders for the benefit of all ELs.

Action Steps and Timeline

High-Leverage Strategy 3.1 Provide adequate and consistent training for school leadership regarding communication protocols.				
Action Steps	**Completion Date**			
	Year 1 2024-25	**Year 2 2025-26**	**Year 3 2026-27**	**Year 4 2027-28**
3.1.1 Develop communication protocols, including the ESOL contact list, for the ESOL department to share with school leadership and schools.		**August 2025**		
3.1.2 Provide a quarterly newsletter (ESOL News You Can Use) with a link to the ESOL contact list.		**August 2025 Ongoing**		
3.1.3 Collaborate with area coordinators to disseminate communication at principal meetings.		**August 2025 Ongoing**		
High-Leverage Strategy 3.2 Establish a standard operating procedure (SOP) for two-way communication.				
3.2.1 EL Department Coordinators will develop and disseminate SOP for Area EL Coordinators.		**Aug-Sept 2025**		
3.2.2 Area coordinators will convey district ESOL communication SOP to all district and school staff.		**August 2025 Ongoing**		
High-Leverage Strategy 3.3 Monitor the current process in place to support the communication protocol.				
3.3.1 ESOL Coordinators formally report on top communication issues at monthly job-like meetings.		**August 2025 Ongoing**		

High-Leverage Strategy 3.4
Recruit more interpreters to support schools through high-quality translation and interpretation services for all family meetings and district-wide events.

3.4.1 Implement retention incentives for current interpreters.	**2025 Ongoing**			
3.4.2 Collaboration with refugee, community, and voluntary organizations to recruit interpreters.		**July 2025 Ongoing**		

The implementation of these high-leverage strategies and related action steps will lead to the achievement of implementation outcomes and long-term impacts:

Implementation Outcomes:

- More effective communication with families, resulting in increased support and achievement of students
- More parents of ELs are aware of school and district happenings, activities and initiatives
- Increased family participation in parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and school events
- Semester audits conducted by the district to evaluate school adherence to communication protocols
- Improved family participation and engagement in school activities

Long-Term Impacts:
Increases in:

- College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores
- Exit rate through clear exits and reclassification
- Participation in Gifted Program
- Participation in AP classes
- Access to ESOL endorsed/qualified teachers
- Four-year EL graduation rate

And decreases in:

- Number and percent of long-term English learners
- Chronic Absenteeism

Implementation Leads

- **EL Department Executive Director**
- **EL Senior Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **EL Coordinator II**
- **EL Professional Learning Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **ESOL Specialist**
- **ESOL Compliance Specialist (Proposed)**
- **Interpretation and Translation Specialist (Proposed)**
- **EL Department Liaison (Proposed)**

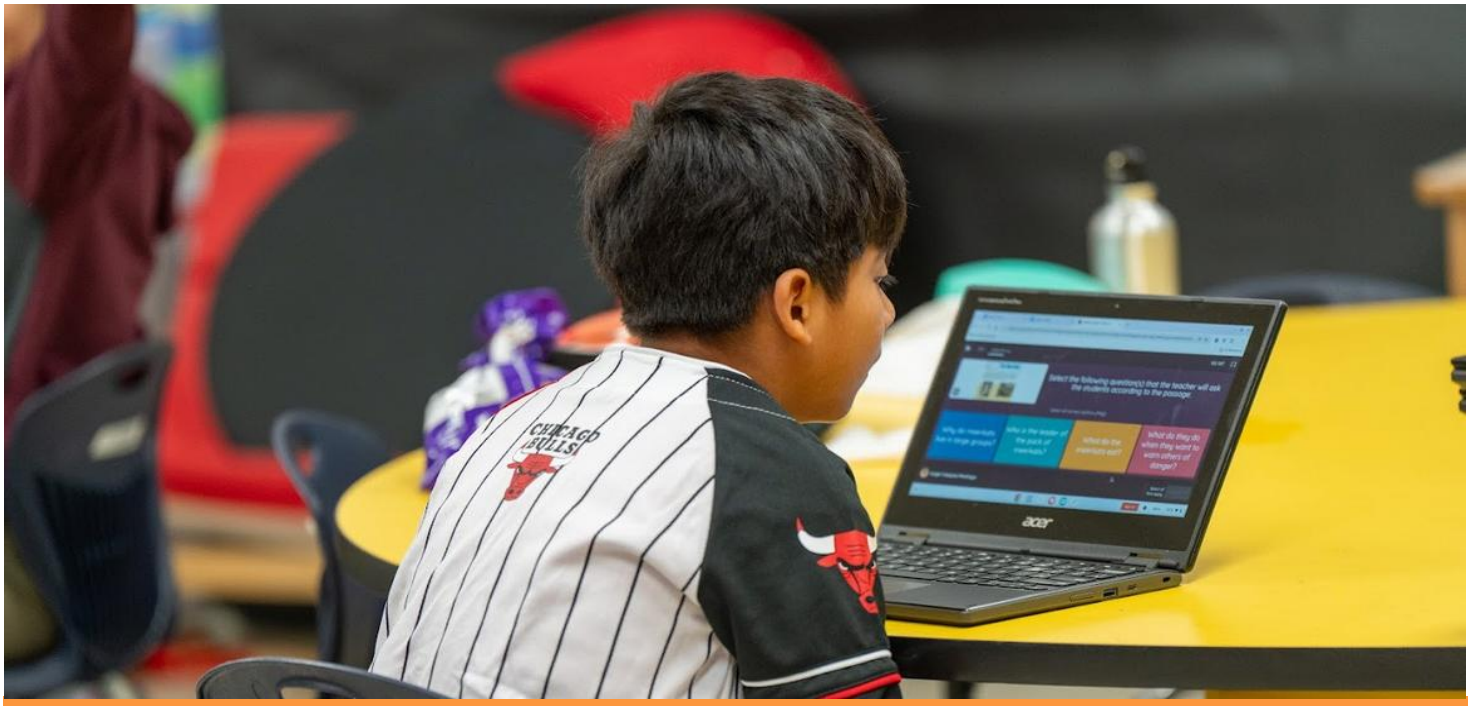
Resources, Partners, and Staffing

- **Area EL Coordinator**
- **EL Translation & Interpretation Unit**
- **Student Support Services partners (SWD & Gifted)**
- **ESOL Lead Teachers**
- **DCSD Communication Department**
- **Community Stakeholders**

Recommended Positions

- **Additional ESOL Specialists**
- **ESOL Compliance Specialist**
- **Interpretation and Translation Specialist**
- **EL Department Parent Liaison**
- **Additional Interpreters**

Goal 4: Develop and implement quality organizational systems and collaborative processes that support all ELs.



Action Plan and Timeline

Action Steps	Completion Date			
	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27	Year 4 2027-28
High-Leverage Strategy 4.1 Identify a team of district and school-level personnel to create and implement organizational systems and remove barriers that impact ELs.				
4.1.1 District leadership identifies a team of people to serve on the Roundtable (see Appendix F for Roundtable Protocol).		Sept-Nov 2025		
4.1.2 Establish a process for developing organizational systems and processes for serving ELs (i.e. graduation rates, reclassification, scheduling, access to specialty programs, etc.).		Sept-Nov 2025		
4.1.3 Establish a schedule for collaborative meetings.		Sept-Nov 2025		
High-Leverage Strategy 4.2 Prioritize the changes that need to be made and revise the systems and processes to serve ELs better.				
4.2.1 Prioritize the systemic challenges (graduation rates, reclassification, scheduling, access, etc.) and establish a protocol for addressing them as they occur.		Sept-Nov 2025		

The implementation of these high-leverage strategies and related action steps will lead to the achievement of implementation outcomes and long-term impacts:

Implementation Outcomes:

- Cross-functional planning structures at the district and school levels to support ELs' needs
- Asset-oriented district-wide system where all educators share responsibilities for supporting and sustaining ELs' academic and linguistic development

Long-Term Impacts:

Increases in:

- Participation in Gifted Program
- Participation in AP Classes
- Four-year EL graduation rate

And a decrease in:

- Chronic absenteeism

Implementation Leads

- **EL Senior Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **EL Coordinator II**
- **ESOL Specialist**

Resources, Partners, and Staffing

- **Area EL Coordinator**
- **Counselor/Social Worker**
- **Student Support Services partners (SWD & Gifted)**
- **ESOL Lead Teacher**
- **Curriculum & Instruction Division**
- **Division of Access and Opportunity**

Recommended Positions

- **Additional ESOL Specialists**
- **EL Senior Coordinator**

Goal 5: Increase meaningful collaboration and support active engagement with Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) families for student success.

Action Plan and Timeline

Action Steps	Completion Date			
	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27	Year 4 2027-28
High-Leverage Strategy 5.1 Develop ambassador programs at all local schools.				
5.1.1 Create an outline that details the description and expectations of the program.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
5.1.2 Identify parents and students who are interested in fulfilling the role of ambassador.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
5.1.3 Create a schedule that fits the needs of the schools and families.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
5.1.4 Offer local training at the school.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
High-Leverage Strategy 5.2 Invite parents of ELs to school-based organizations and offer language and other support for shared decision making.				
5.2.1 Ensure access to interpretation and translation services.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
5.2.2 Consistent meaningful communication practices for meetings.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
5.2.3 Utilize a variety of communication channels to disseminate information to ensure opportunities for shared decision making.		Sept 2025 Ongoing		
High-Leverage Strategy 5.3 Establish satellite locations within the community for school organizations/meetings.				
5.3.1 Identify community partners that can provide resources and support.		Jan 2026 Ongoing		
5.3.2 Identify strategic satellite locations in the community.		Jan 2026 Ongoing		

5.3.3 Recruit highly qualified interpreters to serve satellite locations.		**Jan 2026 Ongoing**		
High-Leverage Strategy 5.4 Create/offer family sessions throughout the year providing guidance and support navigating the educational system.				
5.4.1 Align family sessions within the feeder pattern schools strategically throughout the year.		**Sept 2025 & Jan 2026 Ongoing**		
5.4.2 Create a schedule for the beginning of each semester (September & January) that outlines key educational system topics (testing, graduation requirements, credit recovery, etc.) throughout the year.		**Sept 2025 & Jan 2026 Ongoing**		

The implementation of these high-leverage strategies and related action steps will lead to the achievement of implementation outcomes and long-term impacts:

Implementation Outcomes

- More families engaged in events, meetings, and shared decision-making
- More families access resources and school-based systems
- More two-way communication between families and school to access families' funds of knowledge

Long-Term Impact

Increases in:

- College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores
- Exit rate through clear exits and reclassification
- Participation in Gifted Program
- Participation in AP Classes
- Four-year EL graduation rate

And decreases in:

- Number and percent of long-term English learners
- Chronic absenteeism

Implementation Leads

- **EL Senior Coordinator (Proposed)**
- **EL Coordinator II**
- **EL Department Parent Liaison (Proposed)**
- **ESOL Specialist**
- **Interpretation and Translation Specialist (Proposed)**
- **EL Department Parent Liaison (Proposed)**

Resources, Partners, and Staffing

- **Area EL Coordinator**
- **School Counselors**
- **Community stakeholders**
- **ESOL Lead Teachers**

Recommended Positions

- **Additional ESOL Specialists**
- **EL Department Parent Liaison**
- **Interpretation and Translation Specialist**

RMC RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

From October 2024 through February 2025, RMC Research Corporation conducted an evaluation of the DCSD ESOL Program. From the study's findings RMC made four recommendations for improving ESOL program services and practices:

1. **Update and refine the ESOL Handbook**
   - Develop and implement a process to clearly communicate to teachers and school leaders that EL student progress must be monitored regardless of the student's participation in the ESOL program. Address in a separate section the MTSS/RTI process for ELs needing Tier 2–3 support regardless of their participation in the ESOL program. Additional ESOL Specialists would support teachers and MTSS specialists in ensuring that students receive adequate support for the MTSS/RTI process.
   - The Parent Waivers section (p. 14) could include Step 7 of the Parent Waiver of ESOL Services Standard Operating Procedures which states, "Create a written plan, such as *an Instructional Language Plan* (ILP), explaining how the school will meet the language and academic needs of ELs whose parent/guardian waives ESOL services, and upload it to Infinite Campus" (p. 1). The ILP must be updated annually if and when a new waiver is received from the parent, and it should be made available to all teachers serving this EL student each school year.

   Data Source: District ESOL Handbook, Parent Waiver of ESOL Services Standard Operating Procedures, 2024
   Rationale: Improve communication with schools to implement sound practices that support positive outcomes for English learners (ELs)

2. **Develop and disseminate a communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders**
   - Revise the current method of internal dissemination (i.e., to teachers, school leaders, and other instructional staff) of information on district instructional resources and materials available to serve ELs. Services and information provided by all EL Coordinators must be consistent and the same throughout the district. In addition to the ESOL Handbook (DCSD, 2024), provide training to all area EL Coordinators, EL Department Coordinators, and Specialists to ensure they are knowledgeable and well-informed about all relevant topics and can provide the same level of support and response to all schools across the district. Services and information about mandates provided by all EL Coordinators, additional ESOL Specialists, and ESOL Compliance Specialists must be consistent.
   - Offer training, coaching, tools, and techniques to staff on communicating with non-English-speaking families.
   - Review and improve access to in-person communication with non-English-speaking families to develop effective school-family engagement.
   - Establish practices in conjunction with the Research, Data, and Evaluation department to generate EL achievement, clear exit/reclassification trends, and EL graduation rates with

disaggregated data to be published annually. Parent Liaisons and additional ESOL Specialists can support the communication and dissemination of the data reports.

Data Sources: District ESOL Handbook, Parent/Student Focus Groups, Principal Focus Groups, Parent Surveys
Rationale: Improve communication practices that advance systems change

3. **Review resource allocation**
   - Utilize resources to hire additional staff (ESOL Specialists, Parent Liaisons, and ESOL Compliance Specialists) and review the allocation of resources (talent recruitment, instructional materials, etc.) to support the needs of the EL population; determine outcomes associated with each service and keep/expand only those associated with positive outcomes (GADOE, 2024d, p.5).
   - Increase collaboration between Area EL Coordinators and the EL Department to increase school administration knowledge of ESOL delivery models to facilitate a review of the allocation of ESOL teachers across segments, focusing on an analysis of scheduling, current allocations, and student outcomes. Review the allocation of ESOL teachers across segments, focusing on an analysis of scheduling, current allocations, and student outcomes. Recruit and retain highly qualified ESOL teachers to expand ELs' access to sheltered instruction.

Data Sources: District ESOL Handbook, Standard Operating Procedure-Intensive English, District Focus Group, Principal Focus Group, Instructional Leader Survey, Teacher Survey, Administrative Data (ESOL segments, language and achievement scores)
Rationale: Improve use of allocated resources

4. **Improve meaningful access to the curriculum**
   - Provide effective, high-quality professional learning that includes modeling and coaching of specific evidence-based instructional practices to **ESOL teachers, general education teachers, and building administrators** across schools, grade levels, and subjects. The recruitment of additional ESOL Specialists and EL Professional Learning Coordinators will enable DCSD to positively impact all teachers' instructional capacity to better serve ELs.
   - Revise the current classroom observation instrument for EL coaching practices to include indicators of high-quality, evidence-based instructional practices when serving ELs.
   - Provide ongoing professional learning and coaching to ESOL teachers, general education teachers, and school-level instructional leaders on the use of formative (real-time and benchmark) and summative assessment data to monitor progress in English language development and to inform high-quality instruction. EL Professional Learning Coordinators must collaborate with ESOL Specialists to guide all teachers towards implementing data-driven instructional strategies.
   - Collaborate with designated DCSD stakeholders to impact advising practices so that schedules for ELs promote and increase their participation in higher-level courses in middle school and AP and IB courses in high school. EL Senior Coordinators must engage in partnerships with identified DCSD stakeholders for the benefit of ELs.

- Revise the process to support ELs with parent waivers. For monitoring purposes, ESOL Lead Teachers and ESOL Compliance Specialists must ensure the effectiveness of the support provided to waived ELs.

Data Sources: Average implementation of high-quality instruction and assessment as evidenced through Classroom Observation data, Principal Surveys, District ESOL Handbook, English Learners ACCESS Band Movement – All Areas (2025), Clear Exit and Reclassification data, Graduation Rate data

Rationale: Improve teacher practice with using evidence-based instruction, improve student outcomes, increase opportunities for EL students

After the evaluation phase, RMC led DCSD through the process of developing the English Learners Master Plan, where the EL Department and stakeholders observed data sets from the evaluation, made inferences, and identified needs. Through the identification of these needs, the EL Department and Stakeholder Committee developed the five strategic goals outlined in the previous section. Alignment between the recommendations made by RMC and the five English Learners Master Plan goals is illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7. Recommendations and Goal Alignment

DCSD English Learners Master Plan Strategic Goals	RMC ESOL Program Evaluation Recommendations			
	Update and refine the DCSD ESOL Handbook	Develop and disseminate a communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders	Review resource allocation	Improve meaningful access to the curriculum
Goal 1: Facilitate comprehensive implementation of high-quality curriculum and supplemental materials aligned with GA Standards that support the academic success of all English learners (ELs).				X
Goal 2: Provide tailored, high-quality professional learning to meet the needs of teachers, administrators, counselors, and clerical staff for the benefit of ELs.				X

Goal 3: Develop and implement effective and timely two-way communication processes for all school and district staff, families, and other stakeholders for the benefit of ELs.	X	X		
Goal 4: Develop and implement quality organizational systems and collaborative processes that support all ELs.			X	
Goal 5: Increase meaningful collaboration and support active engagement with Primary Home Language Other than English (PHLOTE) families for student success.		X		

Based on these ESOL program evaluation outcomes, the RMC team and English Learners Department have identified where additional resources are needed to support the achievement of the strategic plan's goals. Additional resources and funding are needed for:

Curriculum

- Developing ESOL curriculum and trainings for implementation.
- Revising current ESOL curriculum to align with new GSE standards.
- Developing SLIFE curriculum.

Professional Learning & Coaching

- Expanding district-wide SIOP training.
- Ongoing support for school-level instructional leaders, ESOL teachers, and general classroom teachers with progress monitoring of EL students' academic language using formative, benchmark, and summative data.

Support and Monitoring

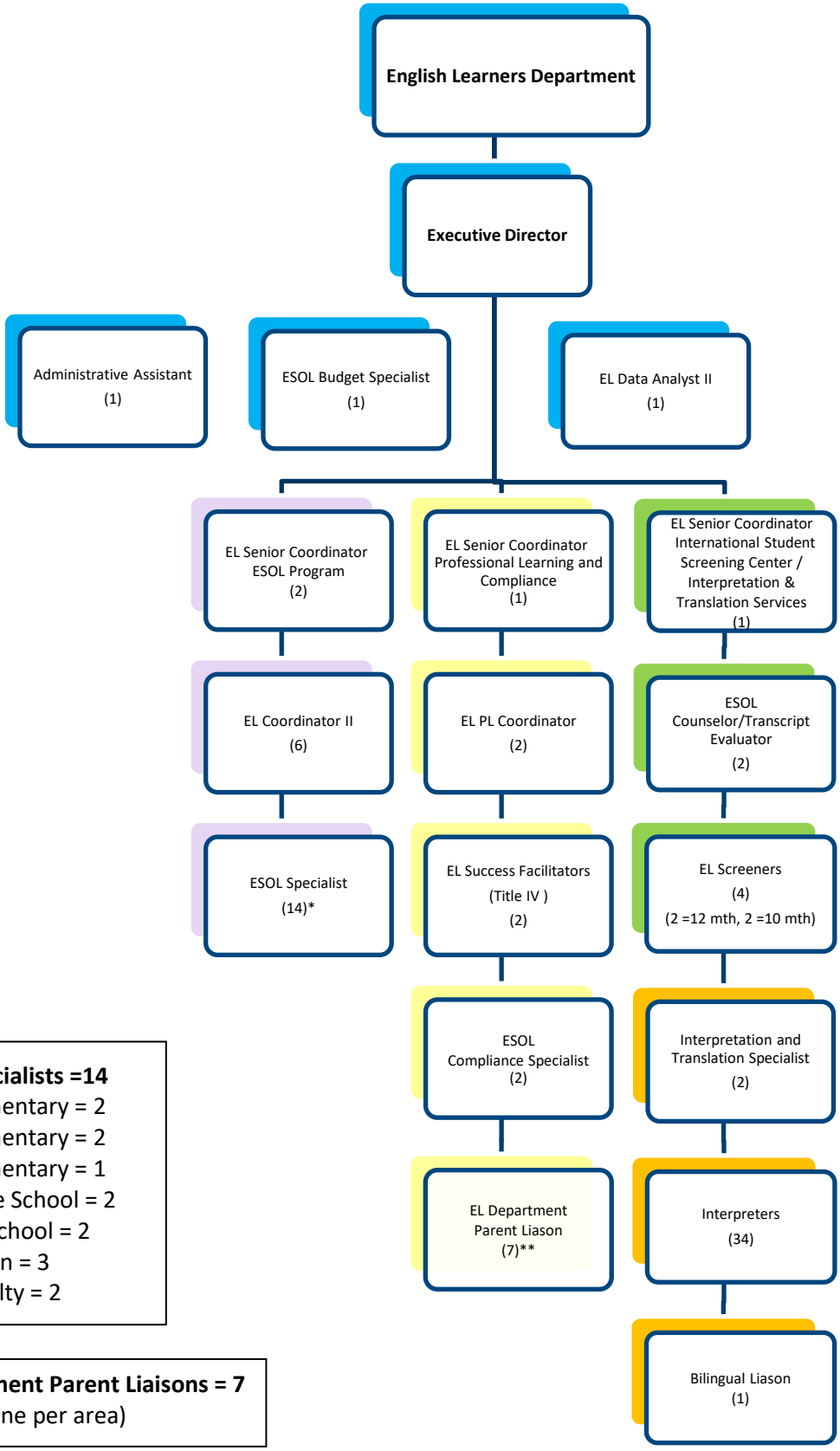
- Supporting teachers with new reclassification efforts.
- Supporting teachers with implementing Instructional Language Plans (ILPs) to fidelity.

Organizational Expansion of the English Learners Department

- Recruiting additional ESOL specialists and newly proposed EL Professional Learning Coordinators to provide training and coaching for implementation at the school level.
- Hiring additional ESOL endorsed or certified teachers and interpreters to fully implement the DCSD EL Master Plan to facilitate meeting the five goals within the next four years.

These staffing recommendations are summarized in the previous section *Implementation Action Plan: Strategic Goals and Timeline*. Figure 16 depicts a proposed new configuration of the English Learners Department based on these recommendations.

Figure 16. Proposed English Learners Department Organizational Chart



*** ESOL Specialists =14**
Area 1 Elementary = 2
Area 2 Elementary = 2
Area 3 Elementary = 1
Area Middle School = 2
Area High School = 2
Area Horizon = 3
Area Specialty = 2

****EL Department Parent Liaisons = 7**
(one per area)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A

Academic English

Academic English is the English language ability required for academic achievement in context-reduced situations, such as classroom lectures and textbook reading assignments. This is sometimes called Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

WIDA ACCESS 2.0

ACCESS 2.0 is an English language proficiency assessment used in WIDA Consortium member states to measure the English language skills of K-12 students identified as English learners. It assesses the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, aligned with the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards. The test is administered annually to monitor students' progress in acquiring English proficiency and meets federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Accommodation

An accommodation is provided when language (spoken or written) is adapted to make it more understandable to second language learners. During assessments, accommodations may be made to the presentation, response method, setting, or timing/scheduling of the assessment (Baker, 2000; Rivera & Stansfield, 2000).

Advanced Placement (AP) Class

An AP (Advanced Placement) class is a rigorous, college-level course offered to high school students. These classes are designed to prepare students for the rigor of college coursework and offer the opportunity to earn college credit by passing a corresponding AP exam.

Assessment

Assessment is a broad term used to describe the gathering of information about student performance in a particular area.

B

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) is often referred to as "playground English", "survival English", or "social language." It is the basic language ability required for face-to-face communication, where linguistic interactions are embedded in a situational context called context-embedded language.

Biliteracy

Biliteracy is the ability to communicate and understand written thoughts and ideas using grammatical systems, vocabulary, and written symbols of two different languages.

C

CCRPI

College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) is a tool that measures how well schools, districts, and the state are preparing students for post-secondary education and careers.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more school days. It is a serious issue with far-reaching consequences for students and schools. It can lead to academic difficulties and other adverse outcomes. Factors contributing to chronic absenteeism are often intertwined, including health issues, family circumstances, and social-emotional challenges.

Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the language ability required for academic achievement in a context-reduced environment. Context-reduced environments include classroom lectures and textbook reading assignments, with few environmental cues (facial expressions and gestures) that help students understand the content.

Content Area

Content areas include academic subjects such as math, science, English/language arts, reading, and social sciences. Language proficiency may affect performance in these areas.

Content Area Teachers

Content area teachers are certified educators who teach academic subjects (math, science, English/language arts, history).

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment is an element of responsive instruction in which the teacher regularly monitors student performance to determine how closely it matches the instructional goal.

Credit Recovery Program

This program helps students who have not passed a course and earned the credit they need to graduate or continue their education. The program typically offers online courses or modules that allow students to retake the material and demonstrate mastery through assessments, pre-tests, post-tests, and final exams.

Curriculum

Curriculum is a guide for all educators for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to rigorous academic experiences.

D

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching that includes planning and executing various approaches to content, process, and product. It is used to meet the needs of students with differences in readiness, interests, and learning needs.

E

English Language Development (ELD)

English language development (ELD) is instruction designed specifically for English language learners to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. This type of instruction primarily focuses on English language development and not academic content. The WIDA ELD Standards Framework provides a foundation for enhancing curriculum, instruction and assessment for (K-12) English learners.

English Learners (ELs)

English learners (ELs) are students in the process of learning English. While many ELs are immigrants, the majority are born in the U.S.

Other names for this student population:

- English language learner (ELL)
- Dual-language learners
- Bilingual/multilingual students

English Learner Subgroup

The overall umbrella for ESOL service in DCSD is broken into many subgroups:

- Intensive English Program
- Lab/SLIFE Program
- Long-term English Learners (LTEL)
- Refugee

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

To master academic language, English learners must develop proficiency in the four language domains: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Every state is required to have its own set of English language proficiency (ELP) standards that lay out what a student should be able to do in English in each domain and at each level of English proficiency.

Entry criteria

Entry criteria are guidelines that designate students as English language learners and help place them appropriately in language support services. Criteria include a home language survey and English language proficiency test performance.

ESOL

ESOL is defined as English to speakers of other languages. This does not refer to the student but to the name of the course.

Other names for programs of English instruction:

- English as a second language (ESL)
- English language development (ELD)
- English as a New Language (ENL)
- English language learner (ELL) instruction
- English learner (EL) instruction

ESOL Endorsed or Certified Teachers

An ESOL-endorsed teacher is a qualified educator who has completed specialized coursework and training to teach English to English learners effectively. This training prepares them to teach ESOL-designated courses and support English learners in regular classrooms. Content-certified teachers who become ESOL endorsed qualify to teach Sheltered Content courses.

Exit criteria

Exit criteria are guidelines for ending special services for English language learners and placing them as fluent English speakers in mainstream, English-only classes. These criteria are usually based on a combination of performance on an English language proficiency test, grades, standardized test scores, and teacher recommendations.

Exit Rate

The ESOL exit rate is the percentage of students exiting the ESOL program annually. It can vary based on the specific district and its exit criteria.

F

First Language

The first language is a student's native language. Sometimes, it is referred to as L1 in shorthand.

Fluency

Fluency is reading a text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression and comprehension. Fluent readers can focus on the text's meaning, as they do not have to concentrate on decoding words.

G

Gifted Program

DCSD's Gifted Program enhances the talents and intellectual curiosity of students who meet certain academic and/or creative criteria. These students often require special instruction or services to reach their full potential.

Georgia Standard of Excellence (GSE)

GSE refers to the Georgia Standards of Excellence, the state-level curriculum standards that guide education in Georgia. These standards cover subjects like English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts, setting expectations for student learning at each grade level. The GSE is designed to help prepare students for college and careers.

H

Higher Cognitive Demands

High cognitive demand requires significant mental effort and engagement beyond rote memorization or simple procedures. It challenges students to think deeply, analyze information, and make connections. These tasks often involve problem-solving, higher-order thinking, and applying concepts in real-world situations.

Highly Qualified Interpreters

DCSD interpreters possess proven abilities to effectively and accurately interpret, both receptively and expressively, using specialized vocabulary. They have professional credentials, like certification from organizations such as the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI) or Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID). They may have passed exams or evaluations demonstrating interpreting competence.

Home Language Survey

The home language survey is a questionnaire completed by parents or guardians to identify a student's primary language and determine if they need additional language support services. It is the primary step in identifying potential English learners (ELs) and ensuring all students receive appropriate instruction.

I

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a plan outlining special education and related services specifically designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability. IEP meetings are held by the IEP team, including the ESOL teacher, concerning how a dually identified (EL and SWD) student is served.

Instructional Framework

An instructional framework is a structured approach that provides a foundation for teaching and learning; it guides educators on how to plan and deliver instruction, and assess learning. It is a shared understanding of educational goals and principles, helping schools and districts ensure consistent, high-quality instruction. DCSD's instructional framework for serving English learners is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol.

Instructional Language Plan (ILP)

An instructional language plan is a document that outlines areas of language needing improvement and strategies to address them. It guides how academic language will be taught, learned, and assessed in a specific educational context. It is particularly important for English learners who may require individualized support.

Instructional Model – An instructional model is the structured approach to teaching English language learners in each course. The allowable types of instructional models are:

- Sheltered
- Push-in
- Pull-out
- Newcomer programs - Intensive English and Lab/SLIFE

Instructional Planning

Instructional planning for English learners includes collaborative planning that connects ESOL instruction with general education by involving multiple educators in designing, implementing, and evaluating lessons for English learners. This approach ensures that ELs' language development needs are met alongside their academic content learning.

Intensive English Program

DCSD's Intensive English Program serves English learners who are attending their first US school and score below Level 2 on the WIDA Screener.

L

Language Development Framework

A Language Development Framework provides a structure and foundation for language instruction and development. DCSD utilizes the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) as the foundation for teaching and learning.

Language Proficiency

Proficiency in a second language means effectively communicating or understanding thoughts and ideas through the language's grammar, vocabulary, and use of sounds or written symbols.

Learning Walks

Learning walks are brief, non-evaluative classroom visits designed to gather information about teaching and learning practices. They are a collaborative tool for teachers and leaders to observe classrooms and discuss how to improve student learning.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

The federal government, most states, and local school districts use the term to identify students who are learning English to succeed in English academic learning environments.

M

Milestone Test (Criterion-referenced)

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) is a criterion-referenced test designed to measure how well students have mastered the content standards in core subjects like language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. It is used to determine a student's achievement level and provide information about their readiness for the next grade or course. They are nationally and locally available.

N

Newcomer Program

A newcomer program addresses the needs of recent immigrant students, most often at the middle and high school level, especially those with limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries. The major goals of our newcomer program are to acquire beginning English language skills along with core academic skills and to acculturate to the U.S. school system.

P

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a group of educators who collaborate regularly to improve their teaching skills and student outcomes. PLCs often follow a collective inquiry and research cycle to enhance instruction and learning.

Professional Learning

Professional learning refers to the ongoing process of educators, individually and collectively, developing their knowledge, skills, and practices to improve student outcomes. It is a shift from viewing professional development as a one-time event to a continuous, collaborative, and relevant journey of learning and growth.

R

Research-based

Practices or interventions that are informed by scientific research and theories grounded in well supported theories and existing research, making them a step towards evidence-based practice.

S

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer. This enables the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to do alone, to foster the student's capacity to perform the task on his or her own later.

SLIFE

Students with limited or interrupted formal education.

W

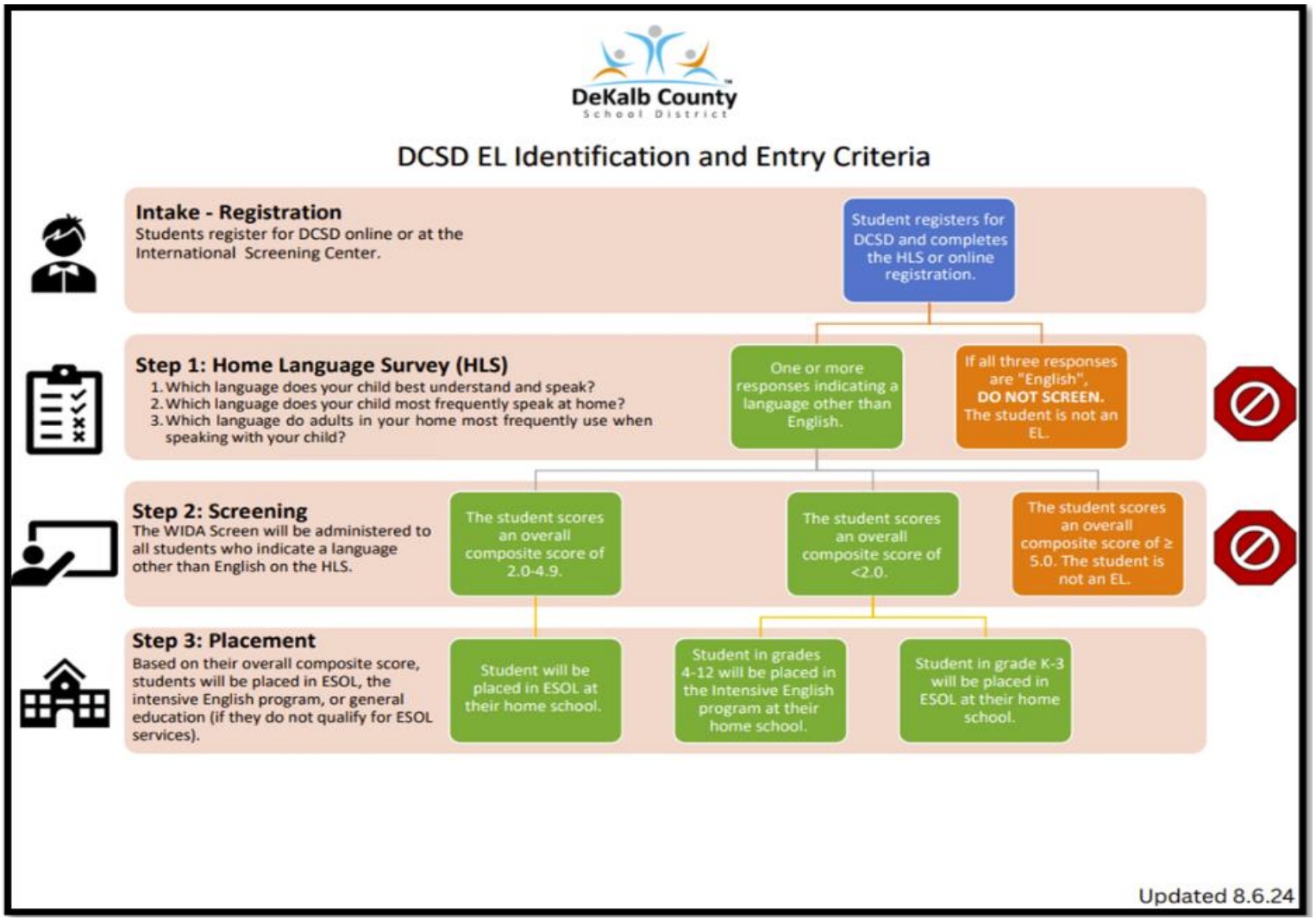
Walkthrough

"Walkthroughs" refer to brief, informal classroom observations used by administrators, teachers, or other educational experts to gather data and provide feedback on teaching practices and student learning. These observations are typically structured and non-evaluative, focusing on specific behaviors or aspects of instruction rather than a comprehensive evaluation.

WIDA Standards

WIDA standards are a framework for teaching and assessing English language development for English learners in grades K-12. They outline the language skills and knowledge students need to succeed academically in various subjects.

APPENDIX A – DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH LEARNERS IDENTIFICATION AND ENTRY CRITERIA CHART



APPENDIX B – DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SIX SYSTEMS BLUEPRINT

Six Systems

SYSTEM 1: Standards and Curriculum Implementation - Align teaching and learning with rigorous standards

SYSTEM 2: Effective Use of Data - Improve performance by analyzing and acting on the evidence

SYSTEM 3: Collaboration Planning and Instructional Practices for Deeper Learning - Ensure that instructional planning is effective.

SYSTEM 4: Progress Monitoring and Analysis of Student Work - Inform instruction and increase student learning.

SYSTEM 5: Academic and Behavioral Support - Provide all students with equitable learning opportunities.

SYSTEM 6: Instructional Feedback and Professional Learning - Promote continuous instructional improvement

Source: https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/innovative-solutions-lab/dcsd-spotlight-school

APPENDIX C – DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ESOL ENDORSEMENT FLYER

DeKalb County School District

ESOL Endorsement Program

Program Purpose:

- To prepare classroom teachers to function as knowledgeable ESOL teachers with the goal of meeting the language development and academic needs of students
- To provide training and expertise in the stages of English language development, identification, placement, and assessment, including a variety of evidence-based strategies
- To assist local schools in meeting the goal of obtaining certified staff to teach ESOL courses that support evidence-based instructional practices

Program Admission Requirements:

To be admitted to the ESOL Endorsement Program, participants must:

- Must hold a valid, clear renewable Georgia Teaching certificate

Program Course Offerings:

The DCSD ESOL Endorsement Program consists of four graduate level courses that require high levels of active participation. The four 40-hour classes (200) hours are the equivalent to 20 PLU's.

- Methods and Materials for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Applied Linguistics
- ESOL Instructional Strategies
- Multicultural Education and Cultural Issues

The ESOL Endorsement Program also includes:

- Field Experiences
- ESOL Policies & Procedures Workshop

Key Assessments & Related Assignments	Benefits to School/District	Impact on Student Achievement
Discussions, Journals Workbooks, Case Study	• Meet the professional learning needs of DCSD teachers and students	• Evidence-based-instructional Practices • WIDA ELD Standards • SIOP Components
Thematic Unit Lesson Plans **Video**	• Adheres to Title III and GaDOE regulations for identifying and providing services for EL students	• Certified Quality ESOL Teachers
Portfolio **Clinical Practice Field Experience**	• Builds Capacity in schools to ensure quality and effective ESOL teachers • Impacts student growth and achievement	• Band to Band Movement • Students exiting ESOL Services

APPENDIX D – RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH OUR PHLOTE PARENTS

English Learners Department
Resources for Communicating with our PHLOTE Parents

Communication accessibility is essential to facilitate learning and establish positive home-school connections. The following resources may be used to communicate with DCSD parents whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE).**Daily Classroom Instruction**

The following tools may be used for informal communication.

Options	Uses	Notes
ClassDojo bloomz talkingpoints Translator	• Translating ***basic classroom teacher information*** – logging in, completing tasks, etc. • Communicating basic information to students and families • Messaging and sending short notes to parents	• ***These should not be used for formal meetings (curriculum night, school-wide parent conferences, IEP/504, hearings, etc.) or any official translation or school-wide documents.*** • Please exercise caution when using free interpretation and translation software as the information may only translate words and not meaning. Please limit usage of interpretation and translation software to simple messages.

Interpretation Services for Meetings & Phone Calls

Options	Uses	Notes
Scheduled Formal Meetings Trained Interpreters should **always** be used for formal meeting and school-wide communications.	• Formal meetings (curriculum night, school-wide Parent Teacher Conferences, etc.) • School-wide communications • Interpretation for parent conferences	• **School principals or their designees** may request interpretation services by submitting a request via Plunet. • Special Education meeting requests must come from LTSE and followed already established guidelines.
Contact Parent/Phone Call Requests • Need to relay a message to the parents	• Requests for interpreters to contact parents to relay brief-/non-scheduled communication • The message is clear and there is no need for feedback from the teacher.	• Schools with in-house interpreters or bilingual liaison should contact the staff member assigned to facilitate the meeting/call. o Download and complete parent contact info on "DCSD Phone Call Request to Parents Form" o Send form to assigned in-house interpreter or bilingual liaison via email • Schools without an assigned interpreter or bilingual liaison may request assistance by completing the School Request for Phone Calls form o Download and complete parent contact info on "DCSD Phone Call Request to Parents Form" o E-mail the completed form to lupe_mcmurray@dekalbschoolsga.org
Brief/Non-scheduled or Emergency Over-the-Phone Interpretation	• Brief/Non-scheduled or emergency calls (e.g., student health, behavioral issues, or parent inquiries) lasting no more than 15 minutes	• To request an interpreter, contact the EL Department at: o **678-676-6602** • Schools with in-house interpreters or bilingual liaisons should contact the staff member assigned to facilitate the meeting/call. • Any non-emergency calls or meeting needs to be scheduled and a request needs to be submitted via Plunet

APPENDIX D (continued) – RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH OUR PHLOTE PARENTS

Brief/Non-Scheduled or Emergency Communication
(Administrator Use Only)

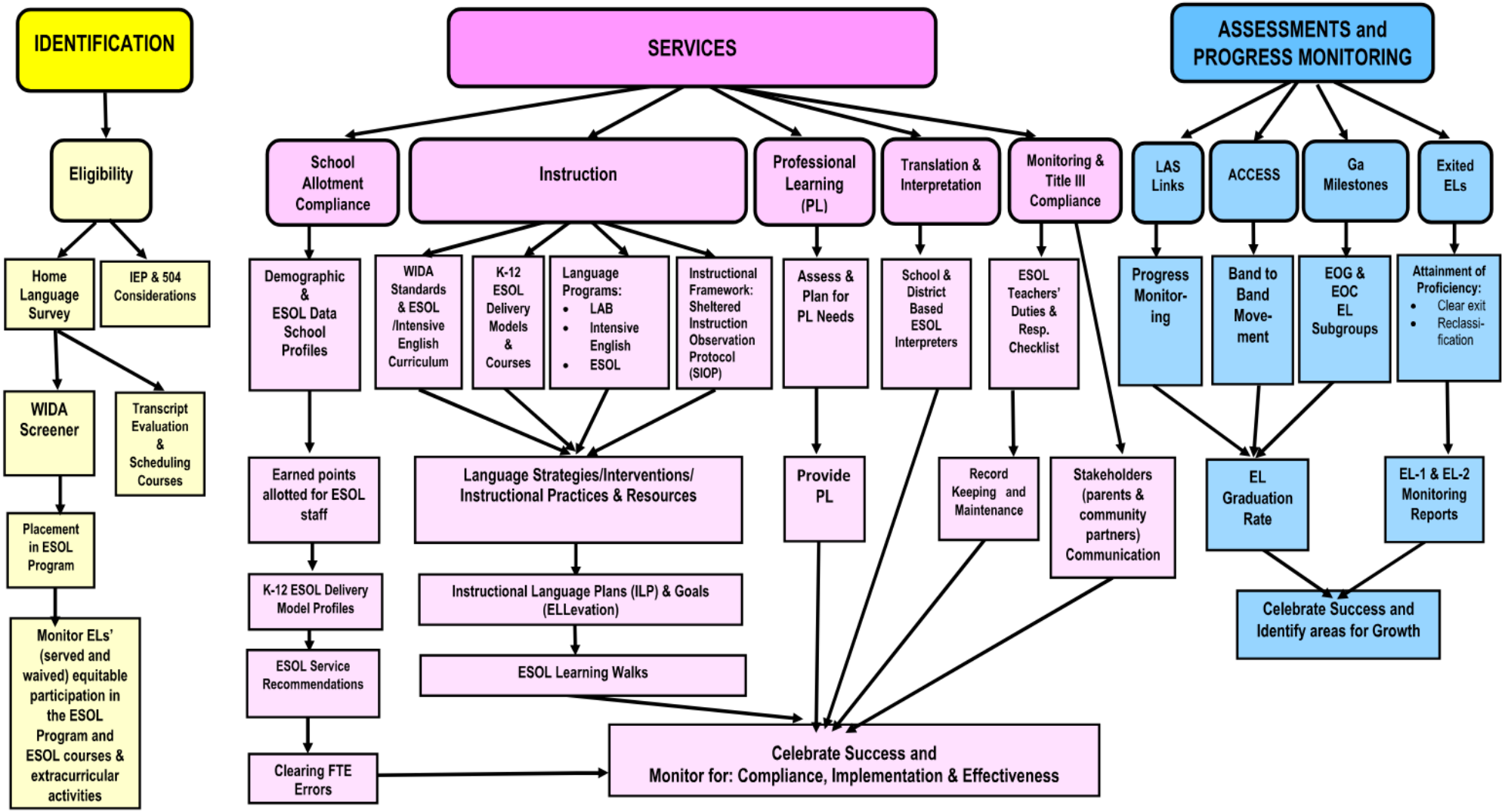
Options	Uses	Notes
ELSA **(App and Land Line)**	• Brief/Non-scheduled or emergency calls (student health, behavioral issues, etc.)	• Use of ELSA requires administrator log-in • Should not be used for long meeting that can be scheduled

Translation Services

Options	Uses	Notes
Plunet	• Web-based platform to request interpretation and **translation services** • School Administrators and Head of Departments can assign a staff member as a point of contact for submitting requests. • Translation of vital documents	• All District-wide communication is translated into DCSD's top 15 languages, and the translations can be requested from the issuing department. • Translations of County-wide communication need to be requested and distributed directly from the issuing department. • Translation of school-wide documents can be requested to the in-house interpreter or by submitting a request via Plunet.

APPENDIX E – ENGLISH LEARNERS DEPARTMENT FRAMEWORK

English Learners Department
Operational Systems for Identifying and Serving English Learners and Immigrants



APPENDIX F – GOAL 4-ROUNDTABLE PROTOCOL

Roundtable Protocol
EL Master Plan
Goal 4

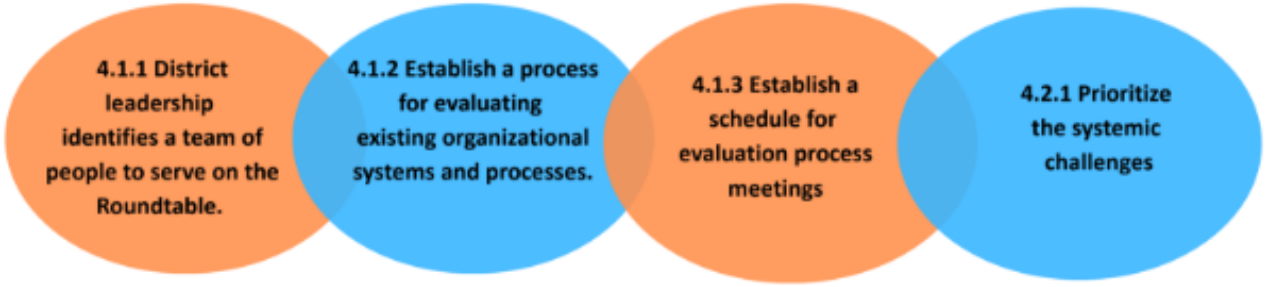
Goal Purpose

Goal 4 of the EL Master plan will focus on developing and implementing quality organizational systems and collaborative processes that support all students.

High-Level Strategies

4.1 Creating a team of district and school-level personnel to evaluate existing organizational systems, processes, and identify challenges that impact ELs

4.2 Prioritizing the changes that need to be made and revising the systems and processes to serve ELs better



Roundtable Protocol

The Roundtable Protocol provides a structured process for the Roundtable Team, Dekalb County School District (DCSD) stakeholders from various departments and roles, to address and implement Goal 4's high-level strategies and action steps. The ultimate desired outcome is to identify and mitigate systemic challenges that hinder English learners' (ELs) success.

1- Challenge(s) Identification and Prioritization	2- Challenge(s) Analysis
• **Data Collection**: What data-driven challenges faced by ELs have been identified? • **Impact of Challenge(s)**: Are the challenges systemic? How do they affect ELs? • **Prioritization**: Which challenge(s) is/are most critical and need(s) immediate attention?	• **Root Cause Identification**: What are the underlying causes of the identified challenges? • **Evidence-Validated Practices**: How can the high level strategies and action steps be utilized to address the root causes?
3- Intervention Development and Implementation	**4- Evaluation and Reflection**
• **Plan Development**: Establishing specific strategies with timelines, responsible parties, and communication avenues as part of the plan of action • **Implementation**: Set the plan of action in motion with necessary resources and support	• **Monitoring and Data Collection**: Continuously conduct data-driven monitoring of the effectiveness of strategies and action steps • **Data Analysis**: Does the evaluation data show the desired outcome(s)? • **Revision and Adjustment**: Adjust the action plan based on the evaluation data as needed

June 2025

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