so wash co SCHOOLS

Language Access Plan

Equitable Access for Every Family

Our Committment:

South Washington County Schools (SoWashCo Schools) is **committed** to ensuring **every family** has **equitable access** to information. Our Language Access Plan is designed to **remove barriers**, allowing all families to **engage** in their student's **education** regardless of the language they speak or read.

80+ Spoken Languages

The families that make up SoWashCo Schools speak **more than 80** languages. Spanish and Chinese are the most common languages spoken after English.

Below are our top nine languages:

- **English**
- **Spanish**
- **Chinese**
- **Hmong**
- **Vietnamese**
- **Somali**
- **Arabic**
- **Oromo**
- **Amharic**

All Families Have the right to:

- Receive information about their student's education in their preferred language.
- Have an interpreter for important meetings about their student.
- Participate fully in their student's educational experience.

Definitions

English Learner (EL) - a student whose primary language is not English and requires language support as defined by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).
Interpretation - rendering a spoken or signed communication from one language into another.
Language Access Plan - a written document that describes how the district, schools and programs will provide language services to students and families who prefer communication in a language other than English.
Language Services - various resources facilitating communication between speakers who communicate in a language other than English, in a timely and meaningful way.
Multilingual Learner - a student who is developing proficiency or is proficient in more than one language.
Multilingual Staff - staff fluent in multiple languages but are not trained interpreters. They can assist with simple tasks, but should not interpret or be pulled from primary duties.
Preferred Language - the language in which families request services, resources and communications from schools, programs and the district.
Qualified Interpreter - trained professionals who follow the National Code of Ethics and Standards to facilitate communication between individuals who do not share a common language.
Remote Interpreting - interpreting that is provided by a qualified interpreter via telephone or video call.
Translation - converting written text from one language into another, maintaining the original material's intended meaning. For languages that rely on oral tradition (i.e. Hmong, Somali), an oral interpretation may be used in place of written translation.
Vital Documents - materials that are essential to a family's ability to access services in South Washington County Schools

Language Identification

Family Preferred Language

Enrollment Form - While enrolling, families identify their preferred language. Our online enrollment form is translated into five languages and staff are available to assist via bilingual staff and qualified interpreters.

Student Information System - The preferred language for families is visible to staff in Infinite Campus, SoWashCo Schools' student information system.

Educator Communication - Educators are encouraged to ask families about their communication preferences.

Interpretation

Interpretation from qualified interpreters is available upon family request for communications related to academic outcomes, progress, determinations and placement of students in specialized programs and services. Interpreters may also be requested for conferences, enrollment, informational meetings and more.

**Reliance on untrained students, siblings, friends or staff to interpret is not an acceptable practice, as it may lead to misunderstandings.*

Formal Interpretations Provided by a Qualified Interpreter Upon Family Request:

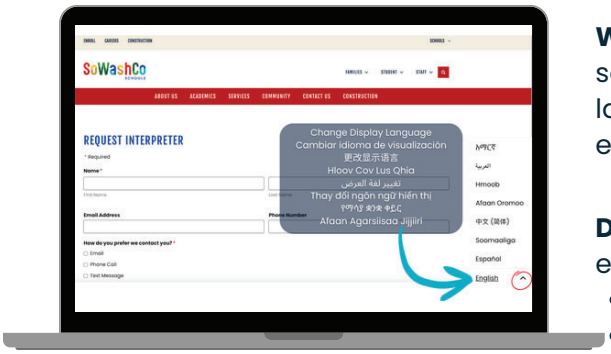
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Meeting about their student's special education needs
- Meetings with the school counselor
- District and school events
- School board meetings

Informal Interpretations May Be Provided by Multilingual Staff:

- Phone call to family
- Casual conversation between staff and family
- General questions and assistance

Translations

SoWashCo Schools proactively translates vital documents into our top five languages. Translation services are available for other documents in most languages, by request.



Website translation: Families can view all district and school websites in our top nine languages by using the language box option located on the bottom right corner of every webpage.

Digital communication translation: SoWashco Schools uses email and texting services that:

- Send information in our top nine languages
- Allows families to choose their language for viewing communications
- Enables staff to send and receive text messages in the family's preferred language

Enrollment Translation: SoWashCo Schools online enrollment process is translated into five languages. Families can also request interpreting assistance to complete online enrollment forms.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

SoWashCo Schools staff are responsible for ensuring meaningful and timely access to information in a family's preferred language. This includes principals, teachers, office staff, counselors, social workers, school nurses, district staff and other personnel.

Staff Training

Training to prepare staff to support multilingual families includes:

- In-person workshops
- Access to step-by-step guides
- Video tutorials
- Cultural understanding related to the delivery of information and services to students receiving English Language services
- Equipment and services available to SoWashCo Schools staff members when working with multilingual families
- Staff guidance around when and how to use:
  - In-person professional interpreter services
  - Video and phone professional interpreter services
  - Professional translation services
- Staff guidance for when and how to use digital translation tools
- Staff guidance for when and how to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) translations
- How to effectively work with interpreters
- Writing and communicating in plain language

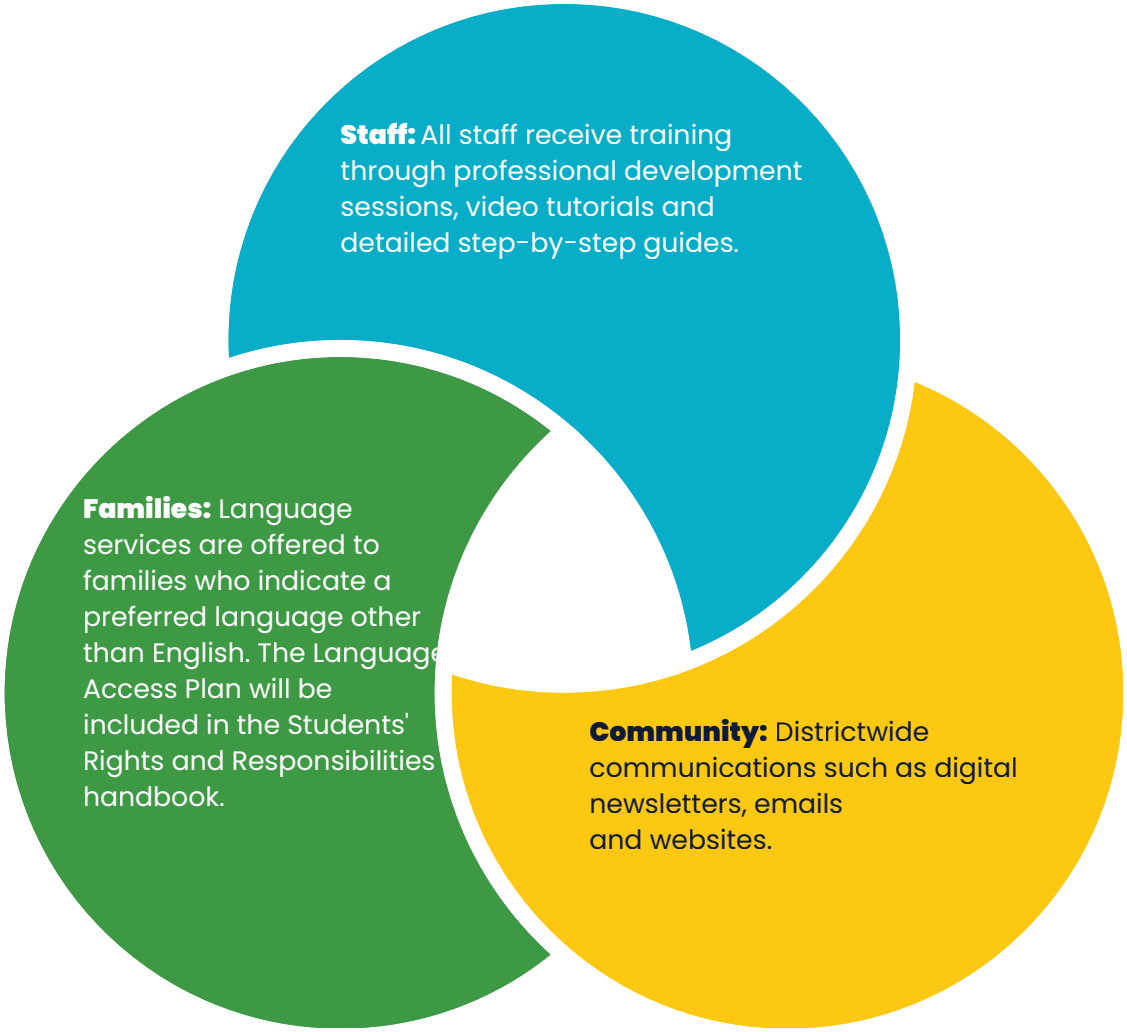
Multilingual Family Support

The following roles are SoWashCo Schools staff who work either directly or indirectly to support our multilingual families:

- Director of Multilingual Services
- Multilingual Support Services Coordinator
- Student Support Services Cultural Liaison
- School Cultural Liaisons
- Community Education - Adult Programs

Language Access Communication

SoWashCo Schools actively shares the Language Access Plan to ensure families and staff are aware and have the training and resources to use it effectively.



Language Access Review

SoWashCo Schools continuously reviews and evaluates the Language Access Plan to ensure it effectively meets the needs of our diverse community.

Feedback on language services is collected through surveys, focus groups and meetings, providing valuable insights to refine and enhance the plan. **The plan will be reviewed by the School Board annually.**

We value input on our language access services and are committed to providing high-quality support. **If you have feedback or suggestions, please contact us at info@sowashco.org.**

Authorities

Title VI 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.

U.S. Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA); Federal law requires states and school districts to provide an equal educational opportunity to students learning English. States and districts must take “appropriate action” to “overcome language barriers.”

Contact Information

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