

# Multi- Lingual Learners and Special Education

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# Definitions & Core Obligations



## Multilingual Learners (MLs)

New Jersey terms English Language Learners as **Multilingual Learners (MLs)**.

Districts must provide effective, **culturally and linguistically responsive language instruction educational programs (LIEPs)** designed to help MLs access the full curriculum and meet academic standards.



## Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

All students — including MLs with disabilities — must receive FAPE under IDEA and state regulations.

# Eligibility Rules & Protections



## Avoiding Misidentification

- A student **cannot** be classified as having a disability solely due to limited English proficiency or lack of instruction in English.



## Evaluation Standards

- Eligibility must be based on multiple assessment measures — not just performance on English-language tasks.

# Identification & Evaluation

## Child Find

School districts must **identify, locate, and evaluate all students**, including MLs who may have disabilities, without delay. This requirement applies even if a student is also receiving language support.

## Assessments Must Be Valid

- When evaluating MLs for special education:

- Districts must assess in a language or form **most likely to yield accurate results**.
- They must consider the student's English proficiency so that lack of English skill is **not mistaken for a disability**.



## Dominant Language Considerations

- Evaluators should determine the student's dominant language and, where possible, assess in that language. If assessments are unavailable, districts may use informal measures and/or interpreters.

# Language Access for Parents and Families: Providing Meaningful Parental Access

## Written Notices & Parent Conferences



New Jersey *special education regulations* (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3 and -2.4) require districts to provide **written notices and conduct parent conferences** in the language used by the parent.

## Qualified Interpreters/Translators



Schools must provide **qualified interpreters/translators** at no cost during **evaluations and IEP meetings** to ensure parents understand and can participate fully.

# Resources



[Language Acquisition Delay vs Disability](#) 

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[Parental Rights in Special Education](#) 

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[MLL Students and Special Education](#) 

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[MLL Students and Specific Learning Disabilities](#) 

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**Thank you!**

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