GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Gwinnett County Board of Education

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| Multilingual Learners | | | |

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## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure equitable access, opportunity, and inclusion for all students identified as Multilingual learners (MLs), regardless of background or documentation status, by bolstering current standards of practice and systems of accountability. This policy outlines a more holistic monitoring of how Gwinnett County Public Schools ("GCPS") is serving linguistically diverse students throughout their K-12 experience, not just while they are classified as MLs. This policy also strives to cultivate learning environments that are responsive to the varied cultural contexts, daily experiences, and family traditions of all students and staff

## Definitions

*Multilingual Learner (ML) / English Learner (EL) This policy uses the term "Multilingual Learner" as the preferred nomenclature of the GCPS Board of Education, but this term is used interchangeably with the state definition of "English Learner".* - a student whose primary or home language is other than English and who is eligible for language instruction programs based on the results of an English language proficiency assessment. This includes students who were not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English. To be considered an ML, a student must have an English language proficiency score below the proficient level on the state-adopted screening measure. The ML (EL) designation is tied to funding under Title III, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

*Long-Term Multilingual Learner (LTML)* - a student who has been enrolled in school for at least five years, or the state's minimum requirement if defined, is not making progress toward English proficiency, and is having academic difficulties due to their limited English skills.

*Student with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)* - A student who has experienced disruptions in their education in their home countries and/or the United States, and/or who are unfamiliar with the culture of schooling. These students are usually new to the U.S. school system and have had interrupted or limited schooling opportunities in their native country. They have limited backgrounds in reading and writing in their native language(s) and are below grade level in most academic skills. Students who have these characteristics could be refugees, migrant students, or any student who experienced limited or interrupted access to school for a variety of reasons, such as poverty, isolated geographic locales, limited transportation options, societal expectations for school attendance, a need to enter the workforce and contribute to the family income, natural disasters, war, or civil strife.

*Newcomer* – A student who has arrived in the country in the last three years and is still learning English. Some newcomers may arrive in the United States voluntarily, while others are forced to leave their home countries due to violence or war (e.g., refugees).

*Former Multilingual Learner (FML)* - A student who has been deemed proficient in English according to the reclassification criteria in their respective state and is no longer receiving targeted language support services. Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to monitor FMLs for two to four years and report to the federal government how these students are performing on statewide standardized assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and math.

*Recently Arrived Multilingual Learner (RAML)* - A student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 12 months. ESSA provides flexibility in terms of how these students are assessed academically and incorporated into the state's accountability system for up to three years. This flexibility applies to the participation of RAMLs in state assessments such as math and ELA, not the English language proficiency assessment, and whether their scores on these state assessments are incorporated into school accountability calculations.

*Dual-identified Students (DI)* - Students who are identified as both MLs and students with disabilities (SWDs) and/or gifted. Local education agencies (LEAs) must provide dually identified students with both the language assistance and disability-related services to which they are entitled under federal law.

## Enrollment, Identification, and Reclassification

All students are enrolled in accordance with federal and state regulations. Enrollment criteria are governed by GCPS Policy and Procedure JBA. No school in GCPS shall deny a student enrollment based on the language spoken at home, nationality, or citizenship status. GCPS should take appropriate steps to provide front office personnel with interpretation technology to accommodate families who speak a language other than English when seeking to enroll their children. When first enrolled, ML students should be placed in educationally appropriate classrooms.

GCPS should take appropriate action to ensure all schools within its jurisdiction are identifying and reclassifying ML students according to the uniform criteria recommended by the State of Georgia as specified in the GCPS ESOL Handbook.

## Language Instructional Program

When appropriate, and generally at least once every five years, or more frequently if GCPS's ESOL Handbook requires, GCPS will take appropriate steps to review the state-approved language instruction models being used to educate their ML-identified students and incorporate them to meet the academic and developmental needs of GCPS's ML population. GCPS leaders should consider the age of ML students, students' proficiency and literacy in their home language, length of time they have been attending school in the U.S., and the language diversity among their ML population to determine whether current program models are appropriate for their ML students.

A newcomer program may also be appropriate if GCPS enrolls a significant number of students who have recently immigrated to the United States and may have limited or interrupted formal education or low literacy in their primary language.

If GCPS determines that changes to its local school ESOL instructional programs are necessary to better meet their linguistic, socioemotional or academic needs, GCPS should consult with all appropriate staff to determine the appropriate changes.

The local school ESOL instructional programs should be supplemented with intentional strategies to ensure learning environments, schedules, calendars and schoolwide routines support the overall well-being and participation of multilingual learners and their families. This includes reviewing how school meals, classroom celebrations, and co-curricular scheduling practices can align with the cultural values

and routines of multilingual families to support belonging and participation.

## Educational Opportunities

GCPS shall not deny MLs from participating in any program, service, or activity solely based on students' English proficiency or country of origin. This includes but is not limited to honors and advanced courses, Career and Technical Education, Gwinnett Online Campus (GOC), Title I services, Special Education, Advanced Placement, extracurricular activities, dual enrollment courses, and athletic programs. If, for example, GCPS has a process for locating and identifying students for a particular program or activity, it should also locate and identify MLs who could benefit from the program by making sure outreach is communicated in a language the students and their family speak and understand. If tests are used to place students in specialized programs, these tests should not prevent a student from qualifying simply based on a student's English proficiency. For programs with entrance exams, testing MLs in English may not effectively demonstrate their ability or skills. In these cases, the district should seek to ensure ML students are provided with appropriate testing accommodations which may include testing the student in their home language.

Additionally, GCPS should seek to provide MLs with accommodations on internal GCPS assessments that provide direct linguistic support when appropriate. This may include but is not limited to a qualified adult interpreter or technology tool that translates directions/test questions or provides clarification in the native language, providing directions and/or test questions in simplified English, a proctor that repeats or clarifies the meaning of directions or key phrases, and/or administering tests in students' home language when applicable and feasible. Under no circumstances should GCPS require family members of ML students to provide required interpretation or other instructional supports. Accommodations on state assessments must be provided in accordance with state approved methods and may differ from accommodations provided on GCPS assessments.

## Qualified Educators and Supporting Personnel

GCPS should provide the personnel and resources necessary to effectively implement the state approved program delivery models. GCPS will offer professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders, anchored in High-Quality Tier 1 instruction and research-based best practices for Multilingual Learners. GCPS will train and work with local schools to ensure an effective ESOL program that meets all state and federal compliance requirements.

For the purposes of this policy, a "qualified" teacher has the proper training and certification to teach English language development or English as a second language. Paraeducators, instructional aides, or tutors should not take the place of qualified teachers. If GCPS uses paraeducators to provide language assistance services to MLs that supplement those provided by qualified teachers, it may do so if the paraeducator is trained to provide services to MLs and is under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher.

GCPS should endeavor to provide annual training for all teachers and administrators on culturally responsive and inclusive classroom practices that affirm students' varied backgrounds and lived experiences, trauma-informed approaches, and inclusive instructional techniques to support academic and language development for MLs. The delivery, participation rates, and quality feedback ratings of these trainings should be reported in the Bi-Annual data report.

## Adequate Funding

GCPS will endeavor to provide differentiated funding per pupil to schools based on the diverse needs of their ML populations (e.g., newcomers, SLIFE, LTMLs, dual identified MLs). GCPS's budgeting process will endeavor to provide additional resources to schools that serve higher concentrations of MLs and/or a high proportion of ML students with compounding needs, resulting in expanded access to ML programming as identified in this policy. Funding considerations should also encompass student well-being and inclusion supports within budget constraints, such as access to meals, materials, and activities that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the district's student population.

As part of its annual budget development process, GCPS should annually review ML-specific state and federal funding provided specifically for ML students to evaluate GCPS's general fund and the proportion that each funding stream (federal, state, local) contributes to the pool of funds available specifically for ML instruction and support. GCPS should also annually review ML-specific expenditures to evaluate how funds are being used and ensure available funds are being maximized for direct ML support. This annual review is intended to allow GCPS Board of Education ("Board") members to continually assess how much funding is being provided to ML education, how adequate that funding is to meet ML needs, and how equitably it is allocated to MLs throughout GCPS. This annual expenditure review should include a review of ML performance alongside to determine the extent to which current funding levels are helping ML students' progress. Additionally, the information provided by this review may empower GCPS and the Board to advocate for more local, state or federal funding to meet the growing and diversifying needs of their ML students.

## Family & Community Engagement

GCPS should develop an ML Family Advisory Council (MLFAC) to enhance communication with multilingual families and increase community involvement in decision-making about ML programming and policies. GCPS should ensure the council includes ML parents and family representatives from a representative sample of schools in the district, to the extent feasible. GCPS shall generally meet quarterly with the MLFAC to receive feedback about the quality of English language programming MLs are experiencing in their schools. This feedback should be included in the Bi-Annual Data Report. As an alternative to the MLFAC, GCPS may conduct these engagement activities with another existing committee, if appropriate and a similar level of representative feedback can be achieved.

GCPS will endeavor to develop partnerships with community-based organizations to enhance family outreach activities, harness additional financial resources for ML programming, and create multilingual support systems outside of GCPS for parents / guardians of ML students. These opportunities should be mindful of the diverse customs, routines, and community rhythms of families served.

At the beginning of each school year or upon a student's enrollment, parents/guardians should be provided information on the types of language acquisition programs available to students enrolled at their GCPS school, including, but not limited to, a description of each program, the process to be followed in making a program selection, identification of any language to be taught in addition to English when the program includes instruction in another language, and the process to request establishment of a language acquisition program.

Whenever a student is identified as a ML based on the GCPS identification process, the student's parents/guardians may choose a language acquisition program that best suits their child. To the extent possible, any language acquisition program requested by the parents/guardians of 30 or more students at the school or by the parents/guardians of 20 or more students at any grade level should be evaluated for feasibility to be offered by the school.

GCPS should strive to provide parents/guardians of ML students with learning standards, grading rubrics / expectations, and any other course syllabus-related information in their native language using interpretation technology and/or other cost-effective solutions as much as possible to help them understand and support GCPS instructional programs.

## Progress Monitoring Towards English Proficiency

GCPS will endeavor to annually review schools' progress toward achieving English language proficiency indicators established in the State's Every Students Succeeds Act ("ESSA") plan to determine whether ML students are generally meeting their personalized annual growth targets and on-track to exit ML status within five years. This data should generally be reported bi-annually (See "Bi-Annual Data Report" section of this policy). Students who are not on track to exit ML status within five years should generally receive additional resources and interventions. The intervention strategy(ies) should generally be presented to the Board as part of the bi-annual accountability reports (See "Bi-Annual Data Report" section of this policy).

GCPS should also develop a proactive tracking system to identify students at risk of becoming LTMLs and implement intervention strategies.

## Data Reporting

To support understanding the success of students served as multilingual learners, GCPS should report annual progress in (a) academic measures, (b) course enrollment, (c) graduation rate, and (d) other indicators of success.
A list of data elements provided may include:

- Student enrollment of ML students by grade and school
- Languages spoken by MLs (% or #)
- Distribution of ML students based on years in the US and WIDA ACCESS performance levels
- Percentage of multi-exceptional students (% of MLs receiving special education supports and % of MLs receiving gifted supports)
- Percent of MLs meeting annual growth targets based on WIDA ACCESS disaggregated by the groups below
- ML Exit Rates
- Standardized assessment results disaggregated by the groups below
- On-track percentages at the end of each academic year for high school students
- Attendance data
- Four- and five-year graduation rates
- Chronic absenteeism for MLs
- Percent of MLs participating in advanced coursework
- Percent of MLs meeting college readiness benchmarks
- Delivery model data by grade and school

Disaggregation available by the following groups:

- Ever ML – A student who has been served as ML at some point
- Recently Arrived ML (RAML – Based on U.S. School Entry Date)
- ML Newcomer – Students within their first three years of the ML program
- Current ML
- Former Year 1
- Former Year 2
- Former Year 3
- Former Year 4
- Former Year 5+
- Never ML
- LTML - A student who has been in a US school for six or more years without exiting the ML program.

~~Bi-Annual Data Report~~

~~GCPS should annually adopt approximately 2-3 highest priority measurable goals focused on increasing long-term academic success for both currently identified MLs as well as former MLs. These annual goals should be incorporated into GCPS's strategic plan as well as its ESOL Handbook, as applicable, and the Board's annual evaluation of the superintendent. In addition to the more narrow set of annual goals, GCPS should collect and report the following data to the Board at least bi-annually for the prior four reporting periods, including progress to associated goals (if applicable), disaggregated by all student subgroups identified in the definitions of this policy (LTML, FML, SLIFE, RAML, DI, and all ML types combined). This data should be compared to their non-ML peers, as possible, appropriate and statistically significant. GCPS should ensure schools with small ML populations also report their ML performance data. For schools with small ML populations that are below n-size thresholds, three-year rolling averages should be used to maintain public transparency on tracking and reporting performance trends.~~

- ~~Number and percentage of MLs enrolled in K-12 by grade.~~
- ~~Languages spoken by MLs.~~
- ~~Percentage of MLs receiving special education services and supports.~~
- ~~The percentage of MLs enrolled in each of the available programs identified in this policy.~~
- ~~Percent of MLs meeting annual growth targets on the annual English Language Proficiency (ELP) and/or WIDA ACCESS assessments 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years after initial ML identification.~~
- ~~Percentage of MLs on track to exit ML status within five years.~~
- ~~Percent of MLs meeting grade level expectations on state assessments – including alternative assessments – in all tested subjects and grade levels, disaggregated by subject and grade.~~
- ~~Percent of MLs meeting greater than a 40th percentile Student Growth Percentile (SGP) as part of the state College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) in all tested subjects and grade levels disaggregated by subject and grade level.~~
- ~~The percentage and risk ratio of MLs enrolled in each of the following opportunities indicating how much more or less likely they are to be enrolled in these programs when compared to their non-ML peers: Honors and advanced courses, Career and Technical Education, Gwinnett Online Campus (GOC), Title I services, Special Education, Advanced Placement, extracurricular activities, dual enrollment courses, and athletic programs.~~
- ~~The percentage of MLs who meet college ready benchmarks on the SAT or ACT in English and math.~~
- ~~Four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates for MLs.~~
- ~~The percentage of MLs who are absent five or more, 10 or more, 15 or more and 20 or more days in the school year.~~
- ~~The dropout rate for MLs in 7-8 grade and 9-12 grade.~~

~~The delivery instances, participation rates, and quality feedback ratings of professional development provided by GCPS per this policy (See "Qualified Educators and Supporting Personnel" section) should also be reported in the Bi-Annual data report.~~

A summary of recent feedback gathered from the ML family advisory council, or its equivalent via another committee, about the quality of English language programming MLs are experiencing in their schools, including how effectively district practices reflect responsiveness to the cultural and community contexts

of multilingual families, should also be included in the Bi-Annual data report (See “Family & Community Engagement” section).

These reports should supplement data collection and reporting specified in GCPS’s ESOL Handbook and should be used to inform future programming to ensure the needs of both currently identified MLs and former MLs are being met.

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