WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Multilingual Learners (ML) Family Handbook

Title III Program Information, Services, Family Rights, and Resources

Welcome
Washington County Public Schools values the rich cultural and linguistic diversity that multilingual learners bring to our schools and community. Our Multilingual Learning program supports students in developing the academic and language skills needed to thrive in school and beyond while building upon their home languages, cultures, strengths, and identities.

International Welcome Center
Pangborn Elementary School | 195 Pangborn Boulevard | Hagerstown, MD 21740
301-766-8288 | iwc@wcps.k12.md.us

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The Law

Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) focuses on multilingual learner success. It requires programs to ensure that all multilingual learners, including immigrant students, achieve both English proficiency and academic success. Multilingual learners must have access to the same challenging academic standards expected of all students.

This emphasis on achievement aligns with the legal responsibilities established in Lau v. Nichols and Castañeda v. Pickard. These court decisions require public schools to provide meaningful and effective support so that multilingual learners have equal educational opportunities.

Under Plyler v. Doe, undocumented students have the right to attend public schools and participate in all school activities. School officials may not require students or their parents or legal guardians to prove lawful immigration status by providing green cards, citizenship documents, Social Security numbers, or similar documentation.

Translation and Interpretation Language Resources

WCPS is committed to inclusion and provides free resources to support communication in multiple languages for families, legal guardians, and staff. Services and resources include:

- Telephone interpretation services in many languages
- Prearranged in-person interpreters for conferences, meetings, and school events
- Translation tools for online newsletters, text messages, electronic communication, and applications
- Translated versions of vital districtwide documents, including health and enrollment forms, transportation and meal applications, permission forms, and other essential information

Interpretation and translation services may be requested through a student's school or by contacting the International Welcome Center at 301-766-8288. Families are encouraged to make requests in advance whenever possible so that interpreter availability can be arranged.

International Welcome Center

The WCPS International Welcome Center (IWC) provides support in multiple languages to guide families and legal guardians through enrollment, language assessment for ML eligibility, and the development of an appropriate learning plan for each student. The IWC also offers workshops, orientation, and training to help families understand the school system, curriculum, available programs, and ways to participate actively in their student's education.

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The IWC supports families who speak any language. Appointments are encouraged. Families who need language assistance or whose students may need multilingual learner services may begin the pre-enrollment process at the IWC. Final enrollment occurs at the student's home school after the IWC pre-enrollment process is completed.

During pre-enrollment, the IWC administers an English language proficiency screening assessment to determine the student's current level of English proficiency and eligibility for ML instruction and services.

Pre-Enrollment Support and Required Records

The IWC can help families complete and review the documentation needed for school enrollment, including:

- Enrollment form
- Proof of birth
- Proof of residency
- Immunization record
- Home Language Survey
- Permission for placement
- School records, grade reports, and transcript history, including translation when needed
- ML instructional, assessment, and student records

Identification and Eligibility of Multilingual Learners

Students are identified for possible English language support based on parent or legal guardian responses to Maryland's Home Language Survey and the results of an English language proficiency screening assessment. If a language other than English is indicated on two or more of the following three questions, the student will be assessed for English language support services. Additional criteria may also be considered when appropriate.

1. What language or languages did the student first learn to speak?
2. What language does the student use most often to communicate?
3. What language or languages are spoken in the student's home?

Privacy Protection
Information collected through the Home Language Survey and screening process is used only to determine whether a student needs English language support services. It is not used for immigration matters and is not reported to immigration authorities.

Parent Notification

A parent or legal guardian permission and notification letter is provided annually for new and continuing multilingual learners who participate in English language development programs, including students whose families have declined ML instructional services. Families are notified:

- No later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year for students who enter at the start of the school year
- Within the first two weeks after a student is placed in the ML program when the student was not identified as a multilingual learner before the beginning of the school year

Parents and legal guardians may accept or decline ML instructional services. However, students who are eligible remain identified as multilingual learners and must participate annually in Maryland's English language proficiency assessment until they meet the state exit criteria.

Instructional Programs

The WCPS English language development program adjusts instruction to each student's strengths and needs. Instructional strategies, practices, and methods are designed to help students learn English while meeting age-appropriate academic standards. WCPS may use one or more of the following instructional models:

Middle and High School ML Courses: Classes that provide intensive English instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

ML-Specific English Instruction: Classes in which English language development and academic content are the focus of instruction for multilingual learners.

Mixed Classes with English Support: Classes that include multilingual learners and non-ML students, with instruction focused on both content and English language development.

Pull-Out Support: Instruction outside the general education classroom that develops academic English, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, study skills, content vocabulary, and cultural proficiency.

Push-In Support or Collaborative Co-Teaching: The ML teacher collaborates with the general education teacher to provide language development instruction and supports within the general education classroom.

Tutoring Support: Additional support provided before, during, or after the school day.

Summer School: Supplemental summer learning opportunities when available.

Program Placement Options and Goals

All program options include English language development and teaching strategies differentiated for each student's level of English proficiency. These strategies help students develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing so they can succeed academically in every subject.

The goals of the WCPS ML program are for students to transition successfully into general education classes, meet the academic achievement standards required for grade promotion, and graduate from high school at the same rate as other students.

Multilingual Learners with Special Needs

For multilingual learners who receive special education services, the English language development program supports the instructional objectives and services identified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Exit Criteria

Multilingual learners are no longer eligible for ML or ESOL services after they meet Maryland's exit criteria on the annual English language proficiency assessment.

Parent and Legal Guardian Rights

Parents and legal guardians have the right to request placement in a different method of instruction if another method is available. They may decline ML or ESOL instructional services at any time by contacting the student's ML teacher or school.

A student whose family declines instructional services must still participate in the annual English language proficiency assessment. The service acceptance or refusal process must be completed annually.

Reclassified Multilingual Learners

Students who no longer require ML services or who have exited ESOL services are monitored for two years. Monitoring helps ensure that students continue making progress toward Maryland academic content standards and student achievement expectations.

English Language Proficiency Assessment

All identified multilingual learners, including students whose families decline services, are required to participate annually in the state English language proficiency assessment known as WIDA ACCESS. WIDA ACCESS is administered to identified multilingual learners in kindergarten through grade 12 during Maryland's annual testing window.

At initial entry into WCPS, students may complete a WIDA screening assessment to determine eligibility and placement. WIDA ACCESS is then administered annually, generally during the second semester. The assessment measures English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

WIDA ACCESS results are reported across six proficiency levels:

- Entering
- Emerging
- Developing
- Expanding
- Bridging
- Reaching

Results are typically available by late spring. Families receive an individual student score report and information explaining what the scores mean for the student's progress, instruction, and program placement.

Annual Participation Is Required
Even when a parent or legal guardian declines ML or ESOL instructional services, the student must participate in the annual WIDA ACCESS or Alternate WIDA ACCESS assessment until the student meets Maryland's exit criteria.

Alternate WIDA ACCESS

Alternate WIDA ACCESS is designed for multilingual learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. A student may be considered for Alternate WIDA ACCESS only when the student cannot participate meaningfully in WIDA ACCESS, even with appropriate accommodations, and meets all three participation criteria:

4. The student is identified as a multilingual learner.
5. The student has a significant cognitive disability and is eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
6. The student participates in an alternate curriculum aligned with state academic standards and participates in the state alternate accountability assessment.

Alternate WIDA ACCESS is available for the following grade-level clusters: grades 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

English Language Development Standards

Maryland is a member of the WIDA Consortium and has adopted WIDA's English Language Development Standards Framework. WIDA is a multistate consortium that works with state education agencies to advance academic language development and academic achievement for multilingual learners through high-quality standards, assessments, research, and professional learning for educators.

WIDA's grade-level English Language Development Standards correspond to Maryland's grade-level academic standards and use proficiency levels to describe a student's progression in English language development.

Recently Arrived Multilingual Learners

In accordance with federal law, Maryland exempts eligible recently arrived multilingual learners from one administration of the state reading assessment during the student's first year of enrollment in United States schools.

Accommodations for Multilingual Learners

Federal and state laws require multilingual learners to be included in large-scale assessments and to have equal access to grade-level academic content. Teachers use a range of instructional strategies based on students' strengths and needs so students can work toward grade-level standards. Appropriate accommodations during instruction and assessment may also be provided to promote equitable access.

Parent and Community Outreach Services

WCPS provides community participation programs, family literacy services, parent outreach, training activities, and other opportunities for multilingual learners and their families. The ML Department also provides interpretation and translation services upon request.

Información importante
Esta información es importante. Si no puede leerla, pídale a alguien que se la explique en un idioma que pueda comprender, o llame al 301-766-8288.

School-Based ML Points of Contact

Each school has an assigned ML teacher or case manager. Families may contact the school office or the WCPS International Welcome Center to be connected with the multilingual learner point of contact for their school.

District Contact Information and Resources

Role	Name	Email	Phone
Supervisor of Multilingual Learners and World Languages	Paula Moore	moorepau@wcps.k12.md.us	301-766-2977
Administrative Assistant	Xenia (Carmen) Diaz	diazxen@wcps.k12.md.	301-766-2923

		us	
Elementary ML Teacher Specialist	Leia DeWald	dewallei@wcps.k12.md.us	301-766-9042
Secondary ML Teacher Specialist	Georgine Rabenold	rabengeo@wcps.k12.md.us	301-766-2995
International Welcome Center	Sonia Vanegas, ML Family and Teacher Specialist; Indira Rodriguez, Multilingual Paraprofessional; Virgen Garcia, IWC Administrative Assistant and Interpretation Request Services	iwc@wcps.k12.md.us	301-766-8288

Helpful Resources

- WIDA: https://wida.wisc.edu/
- What is WIDA ACCESS?: https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/what-access
- What is the WIDA Screener? Multiple Languages: https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/what-wida-screener-multiple-languages
- Maryland State Department of Education Multilingual Learning: https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Multilingual-Learners/index.aspx
- Maryland Seal of Biliteracy: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DCAA/World-Languages/Biliteracy/index.aspx
- United States Federal Laws and Policies: https://wida.wisc.edu/about/mission-history/fed-law-policy
- Bilingual Glossaries for Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies: https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/language-rbern/resources/bilingual-glossaries-and-cognates

Washington County Public Schools | Multilingual Learning Program

For questions or language assistance, contact the International Welcome Center at 301-766-8288.