



Language Access Plan

This Language Access Plan includes information from sample plan templates produced by the [Minnesota Department of Education](#) and [Project Momentum](#) adapted for use for the students and families of Forest Lake Area Schools.

Communication with families in a language they understand helps students succeed and builds a welcoming school community. Forest Lake Area Schools is committed to communicating meaningfully with all families we serve to provide any and all school-related information and foster mutually beneficial, collaborative partnerships. This Language Access Plan is intended to mitigate language barriers so that families can make informed decisions in their children's education.

This plan also outlines procedures for ensuring that parents and guardians with disabilities have equal access to information and participation. Language access for individuals with disabilities means that they must be able to comprehend and meaningfully engage with the school regarding their child's education, including through the provision of information in accessible formats and appropriate communication supports.

Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of Forest Lake Area Schools' language access plan.

Policy Foundation

Federal

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 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.
- Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) requires states and school districts to provide equal educational opportunity to students learning English by taking appropriate actions to overcome language barriers.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) upholds language access rights for bilingual families by requiring that students be tested in their home language and Individual Educational Plans (IEP) be written in the appropriate home language. IEP meetings must be conducted in the family's home language using a highly trained and qualified interpreter.
- Executive Order 13166 requires the federal government or entities funded by it to provide information understood and communicated with all people of the United States, including those with Limited English Proficiency.

State

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32 states:

- Subd. 1. Language access plan required. Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, during a regularly scheduled public board hearing, a school board must adopt a language access plan that specifies the district's process and procedures to render effective language assistance to students and adults who communicate in a language other than English. The language access plan must be available to the public and included in the school's handbook.
- Subd. 2. Plan requirements. The language access plan must include how the district and its schools will use trained or certified spoken language interpreters for communication related to academic outcomes, progress, determinations, and placement of students in specialized programs and services; and how families and communities will be notified of their rights under this plan.
- Subd. 3. Regular review. The board must review the plan every two years and update the plan as appropriate.
- Minnesota Learning for English Academic Proficiency (LEAPS) Act of 2014, Chapter 272, H.F. No. 2397, Article 1. The law has three principal goals for all English Learner (EL) students: 1) academic English proficiency; 2) grade-level content knowledge; and 3) multilingual skills development.

Language Access Rights

If you are a parent or guardian of a student in public schools and your dominant language is not English, or you have a disability that affects communication, you have the following rights established by federal law:

- School districts must have a process for identifying your language needs.
- Schools must provide information in a language you understand.
- Schools must provide information in a format you can access if you have a disability.
- School districts must provide effective language assistance to you, such as by offering translated materials or a language interpreter.
- Schools must provide you with language assistance even if your child is proficient in English or you have some English proficiency.
- Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for you.
- Language assistance must be free to you.

Section 2: The Plan

Language Identification Procedures

Forest Lake Area Schools will determine parent/guardian language needs through the following procedures:

1. **Enrollment Form:** Upon registration, parents/guardians will identify their preferred language and method of communication. In addition to English, student enrollment forms are translated into the following languages, common in our community:
 - a. Spanish
 - b. Hmong
 - c. Somali

Administrative Assistants are trained in procedures for accessing qualified interpreters and/or FLAS family liaisons to help parents complete enrollment paperwork if needed.
2. **Student Information System:** The preferred language and method of communication of parents/guardians will be visible to all staff in Synergy, FLAS' student information system.
3. **Teacher Communication:** Teachers can see preferred language in Synergy and are encouraged to inquire about communication preferences in their own communication with families.

Tools and Resources to Provide Language Access

See the [Appendix](#) for a list of useful definitions.

School staff will use the following resources aimed at removing language barriers for families in our school community:

Resource	Description/Procedures	When to Use
TransAct ParentNotices	TransACT provides written forms or notices required by ESSA, translated into more than 20 of the most common languages spoken in Minnesota. All Minnesota districts and charter schools can utilize the TransACT website with free access. Individuals within the district can activate their free account at: https://minnesota-doe.parentnotices.com	Required ESSA (Title) parent notifications
Professional Document Translation	Translated copies of district documents are available in a Google Drive folder in the following languages: - Hmong - Somali - Spanish - Others upon request To request document translation, contact Katie Haines at khaines@flaschools.org	- Formal documents requiring a signature from parents - Frequently circulated documents such as: registration and enrollment forms, student code of content, etc.

Resource	Description/Procedures	When to Use
Professional Interpreter  Important Information for School Staff Working with Interpreters.	The Teaching & Learning Department maintains a list of qualified interpreters and interpretation services that can be contracted to provide language assistance. Interpreter services for other languages, including American Sign Language. Staff may request interpretation services by completing the FLAS Interpreter Request Form. Interpretation requests should be made 1-2 weeks in advance of the date the interpretation service is needed. Link to Interpreter Request Instructions. Interpretation fees are paid by Forest Lake Area Schools via invoice. Interpreter Request Form	● District-wide initiatives or meetings ● Parent/teacher conferences ● IEPs or other School Meetings
Multilingual Staff <i>*Note: Students, siblings, friends, and untrained staff members are not considered qualified translators or interpreters, even if they are bilingual.</i>	Multilingual staff may be asked to provide language assistance if they are proficient in the target language, have knowledge of specialized terms or concepts needed for the task in both languages, and are trained in the role of an interpreter or translator*. FLAS has a few multilingual Family Liaisons who assist with in-person meetings and conferences. When requests are made, they are generally the first interpreters contacted. They may also assist with school forms and registrations. For common high volume events such as parent-teacher conferences and school open houses, Teaching & Learning will work with schools and teachers to create an efficient schedule that meets family needs. Requests are also made via the Interpreter Request Form.	● Family engagement events ● Phone calls home
Telephone Interpretation Services	Forest Lake Area Schools has contracted with Language Line, an on-demand telephone interpretation service that	● Phone calls home ● Parent/teacher conferences

Resource	Description/Procedures	When to Use
	offers access to interpreters in 240+ languages. Instructions for accessing Language Line interpretation service.	
Communication Platform(s)	School communications using Finalsite Messenges or SMORE can send messages home in additional languages.	• Notification of upcoming events • Newsletters • Reminder texts to parents

Dissemination

This plan will be published on the [Forest Lake Area Schools](#) website. The district will share information on the Language Access Plan and how to access it in District and individual school communications to families.

Forest Lake Area Schools will communicate Language Access Rights using a variety of strategies to provide families with both proactive and Just-in-Time methods.

- **Teaching & Learning administration and staff** will ensure the plan is in compliance with state and federal law, is published on the district website, and is included in district communications such as school handbooks and school newsletters.
- **The District Welcome Center and School Administrative Assistants** are responsible for providing all families with information about Language Access and this Plan as part of the enrollment process.
- **School principals** will link the Language Access Plan in school-wide communications, including newsletters and announcements. Principals are also responsible for sending communications in families' preferred language, according to the preferred language as noted in Synergy.
- **Classroom teachers** are responsible for sending communications in families' preferred language, according to the preferred (home) language listed in Synergy or as requested by the English Language Development staff.
- **English Language Development staff**, including the **Teaching & Learning Department**, will share language access information at all informational meetings held for families of multilingual students.
- **Special Education staff**, including the SpEd Writing Team, will be responsible for disseminating the Language Access Plan as appropriate before and during the IEP process.

New educators will receive information and training on the Language Access Plan as a part of New Educator Onboarding. School principals will review the Language Access Plan as part of their beginning-of-the-year staff meetings and in-service.

To learn more about the Language Access Plan, procedures for requesting interpretation services or translations, contact the people listed beneath the District Contact information, their school administrator, or English Language Development teacher.

Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Teaching & Learning staff and/or the Curriculum, Instruction & Equity school board committee to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with evolving needs and best practices.

District Contact

For information about Forest Lake Area Schools' Language Access Plan or to provide comments or questions about it, please contact the people listed below.

- *Brittany Hirsch, Family & Student Support Coordinator*
651-982-8370 or bhirsch@flaschools.org
- *Katie Haines, Family Support Administrative Assistant*
651-982-3154 or khaines@flaschools.org
- *Brad Ward, Teaching & Learning Coordinator*
651-982-8327 or bward@flaschools.org

For questions regarding the specific language needs for a student or family, contact the English Language Development teacher at your school.

Appeals Process

If a family, or a staff member or other advocate on behalf of a family, believes that the family's language access needs have not been met, or that the supports provided under this plan are not working, they may raise a concern or appeal using the following process:

Step 1: Contact the school principal to discuss concerns.

Step 2: If concerns are not resolved, submit a written appeal to the Office of the Superintendent.

Step 3: If concerns remain unresolved, the family may request a hearing before the School Board.

Appendix: Definitions

American Sign Language (ASL) – A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

Relay – Telephone accessibility services to people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Screen Reader – Software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read the text that is displayed on the computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.

Interpretation – The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language). The interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting information, summarizing, or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

Interpreter – A person who provides interpreting services.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment – Equipment that allows a group of people to listen through headsets to information interpreted into their primary language. This method is most appropriate for large group settings and meetings where multiple languages are being interpreted simultaneously.

Language Assistance Services – Oral, expressive, written, and technological supportive services that help students and families communicate effectively with school staff. These services ensure students and families can participate fully in school services, activities, and programs.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English, including writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension. Federal law uses this term to refer to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

Emergent Multilingual Speakers – Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English but are in the process of developing their English language proficiency. Language access industry leaders and advocates prefer the use of this term when referring to the intended beneficiaries of language access services.

English Learner (EL) – A status assigned to students whose primary language is not English, who lacks the necessary skills to understand, speak, read, and write in English but are receiving English language development instructions in a public school or charter setting. Moving to using the term, **Multilingual Learner (ML)**.

Home Language – The language that is most commonly used in the home by members of a family, or the language that parents use when speaking with their children.

Primary Language – An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

Sight Translation – The oral interpretation of a written document. This occurs when an interpreter reads a document and then provides a complete oral interpretation of the information that it contains.

Remote Interpreting – Interpreting that is provided via telephone or video call.

Translator – A person who provides translation services.

Translation – The restating of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

Vital Document – Materials deemed vital to ensuring access to educational services, programs, and activities, or contain information required by law to translate or provide in audio format.

