

Plan for English Learners (EL) 2026-2027

FORWARD

This document is based on the *Mississippi English Learner Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports 2018*. To ensure consistency in understanding the purpose and intent of the plan, and to accomplish a successful implementation of the plan, key sections of the *Mississippi English Learner Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports 2018* have been duplicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Rankin County School District is home to some of the finest schools in Mississippi and the nation. Our educational standards are high, and our goal is to educate the whole child. In addition to academic development and growth, the RCSD instructional program includes a wide variety of opportunities to develop the personality, character, and leadership qualities of each student. Students may enroll in accelerated and advanced placement classes and choose from a wide variety of electives, including art, music, computer science, business, and vocational courses.

The district is committed to the identification, assessment, and placement of English Learners (EL) in an environment that facilitates appropriate and effective instruction to meet the special needs of these students. It is the intent of the district to Bring Everyone's Strengths Together including EL students.

Vision: Continue a tradition of excellence by providing a world-class education that empowers all to grow through curiosity, discovery, and learning.

Mission: We will all intentionally focus on empowering our students to reach their maximum potential by embracing opportunities and challenges while cultivating a tradition of distinction in education.

Goals:

1. We will all design and deliver a challenging and globally inspired curriculum, meaningful and engaging instruction, and rigorous assessments that focus on the continuous improvement of academic achievement.
2. We will all experience a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment.
3. We will all operate with fiscal integrity, efficiency, accountability, and transparency.
4. We will all use technology and resources for collaboration, innovation, research, analysis, and problem solving.
5. We will all, as partners with the community, support each aspect of every student's educational experience.
6. We will all grow socially, emotionally, and physically through the fine arts, athletics, service, and extracurricular activities.
7. We will all strive to hire, train, and retain outstanding professionals.

As the number of English learners (ELs) continues to grow, the student population changes and becomes more diverse. Our fundamental challenge is to anticipate such change and pursue it to our students' benefit. If the goal is to improve education for all students, then it must include all students regardless of race, class, and/or national origin. Through our schools, students can gain an appreciation of our cultural diversity and acquire the knowledge and language skills to become productive citizens in our society.

The aim of this document is to provide and support Rankin County School District (RCSD) with information related to EL policies, procedures, and assessments in order to promote achievement for all students.

English learner teachers and general education classroom teachers alike share the responsibility for the ELs' whole education, both in language and academic content. General education classroom teachers, EL teachers, and other support staff should plan jointly to determine instructional accommodations and modifications needed to make language and content as comprehensible as possible throughout the whole school day for ELs.

While English is designated as the official language of the state of Mississippi, and the statewide assessments are in English, our responsibility is to prepare our students to access all educational program options available to them. This objective requires that our instructional approach be flexible to accommodate the needs of a very diverse student and parent population.

RCSD recognizes that collaboration is critical among English learner teachers and content teachers in addressing the needs of English learners (ELs). In order to be successful in meeting these needs, educators must have some understanding of the many differences, such as culture, language, ethnicity, and social and economic status of the family exhibited by ELs. The understanding of the concepts of second language acquisition and language development is a beginning point in addressing some of the differences.

The Mississippi English Learner Guidelines: Regulations, Funding Guidance, and Instructional Supports (2018) provided by the Mississippi Department of Education, provides RCSD with a clear understanding of the responsibilities towards English learners, as well as the components required for an effective district English Learner Plan.

The following components are required and are a part of the English Learner Plan for the Rankin County School District:

- The process for enrolling ELs
- The process for identifying potential ELs
- The process for assessing ELs
- The process for exiting students from EL status
- The process for monitoring students who have exited EL status
- A description of services and instructional supports provided to ELs, including how ELs are given access to challenging state standards
- A description of staffing and resources available to ELs, including how EL services will be integrated with other programs
- A description of how the academic achievement and language acquisition of ELs will be monitored and how EL students will potentially be served through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- How EL programs will be evaluated annually at the school and district level
- How teachers will be trained on EL instructional strategies
- How the district will work to recruit and retain EL certified teachers and staff
- How the district will strengthen connections between EL families and schools, including how information will be provided to parents or guardians and families in a language they can understand.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) Section 1001 of *the Every Student Succeeds Act* identifies the purpose of the Act, which is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps. This purpose can be accomplished by:

- (1) Ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;
- (2) Meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation’s highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance;
- (3) Closing the achievement gap between high- and low performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;
- (4) Holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;
- (5) Distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;
- (6) Improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged;
- (7) Providing greater decision-making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance;
- (8) Providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of schoolwide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;
- (9) Promoting schoolwide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, evidence based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;
- (10) Significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development;

(11) Coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families; and

(12) Affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS?

According to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, an EL is defined as an individual:

- Who is aged 5 through 21
- Who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school
- Who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English
- Who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
- Who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- Who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- Whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual –
 - The ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments;
 - The ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - The opportunity to participate fully in society.

The increase of ELs that settle in communities throughout Mississippi is due to various reasons, for example, major factors that contribute are socio-economic level and employment opportunities. Those school districts that previously had few or no ELs are now faced with the challenge of providing educational accommodations to ELs at different proficiency levels and with various native languages.

A growing number of recent immigrant students are entering U.S. schools with little or no prior formal schooling and low literacy skills. This type of English learner has the challenge of simultaneously developing academic language skills and mastering grade-level content. They may be several years below their age-appropriate grade level in school-related knowledge and skills.

TYPES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

The following chart illustrates three types of ELs and their characteristics.

Newly arrived with adequate schooling	• Recent arrivals (less than 3 years in U.S.) • Adequate schooling in native country • Catch up academically with relative ease
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	• May still score low on standardized testing due to need for English language acquisition
Newly arrived with limited formal schooling	• Recent arrivals • Interrupted or limited schooling in native country • Limited native language literacy • Below grade level in math • Poor academic achievement
Long term English learner	• Below grade level in reading and writing • Mismatch between student perception of achievement and actual grades • Some have adequate proficiency but score low on tests • Have had EL instruction, but inconsistent instructional models

English learners are diverse. In order to teach them well, educators in the Rankin County School District (RCSD) must know who they are, where they come from, and what strengths they bring to the classroom. Educators who work with ELs at the school and district level must understand the academic and linguistic needs of Mississippi's ELs and must provide supports accordingly.

Teachers in RCSD will need to think about student differences as they plan instruction and the differences of their background and academic language proficiency levels. Teaching these diverse learners is complex yet rewarding.

THE RIGHTS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

Federal law prohibits entities that receive federal funds, including Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and public schools, from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Federal law also requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to take "appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by EL students in instructional programs."

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits entities that receive federal funds from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that Title VI's prohibition on national origin discrimination requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to take affirmative steps to address language barriers so that EL students may participate meaningfully in schools' educational programs.
- The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for enforcing compliance with Title VI as it applies to programs funded by the United States Department of Education (USDOE). OCR's principal enforcement activity under Title VI is the investigation and resolution of complaints filed by individuals alleging discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. The failure of RCSD to provide an equal educational opportunity for ELs is

investigated by OCR staff that work with school and RCSD officials to resolve compliance issues. This is accomplished through guidance on program and service planning, resource support, technical assistance, and if necessary, through the administration of proceedings or a referral to the United States Department of Justice for litigation.

In general, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice have identified actions, described below, that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must take to meet their civil rights obligations and avoid the most common civil rights violations.

In addition to these actions, the Rankin County School District will:

- Enroll all students regardless of their, or their parents' or guardians', immigration status
- Protect students from discriminatory harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin (including EL status), sex, disability, or religion
- Not prohibit national origin-minority group students from speaking in their primary language during the school day without an educational justification, and
- Not retaliate, intimidate, threaten, coerce, or in any way discriminate against any individual for bringing civil rights concerns to a school's attention or for testifying or participating in any manner in a school, U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, or Department of Justice investigation or proceeding.

Enrollment of English Learners

The Rankin County School District takes the following steps when enrolling EL students:

- Enroll ELs in school
- Identify ELs
- Assess ELs
- Provide ELs with a language education program and access to academic content
- Staff and support EL programs
- Ensure meaningful communication with parents of ELs
- Provide ELs with access to other program services

At the point of enrollment into the Rankin County School District, ELs are identified. This consistent enrollment procedure of language-minority students includes the use of a Home Language Survey (HLS). A language minority student is one whose home language is other than English. The Rankin County School District makes every effort to have trained school personnel who are dedicated to meeting the needs of students from different cultures with different levels of English proficiency.

When EL students and their families enter the United States, they must become familiar with their new country's culture and customs as well as a new school system and its myriad structures, expectations, and legal requirements. Children who are unaccompanied youth may also be adjusting to life in a new family or home environment. On top of these challenges, many ELs may have had journeys to the United States that involved hardship and trauma.

Welcoming ELs into a school community requires empathy and understanding of the unique challenges faced by these students and their families. It is also necessary to have an understanding of the benefits of creating environments that are inclusive, informing, welcoming, and conducive to full participation and academic success for all students.

The Rankin County School District (RCSD) provides a free and equitable education to all school age children who live within the boundaries, regardless of immigration status. RCSD enrolls all students regardless of their or their parents' or guardians' actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status. The district does not request information from students or their parents or guardians in order to deny access to public schools on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

The Rankin County School District (RCSD) makes every effort to assist EL students without an up-to-date immunization for enrollment. A grace period is allowed for EL students to provide proof of immunization. Families may show proof of an appointment to ensure their child is in the process of getting all required immunization records. In addition, we will assist them with obtaining the MS 121 Form. For example, while the district may require proof of residency, inquiring into students' citizenship or immigration status, or that of their parents or guardians, would not be relevant to establishing residency for ELs in RCSD. The Rankin County School District does not bar an EL student from enrolling because he or she lacks a birth certificate or has records that indicate a foreign place of birth.

Further, if the district requests an EL student's social security number it must: 1) inform the family that providing it is voluntary and refusal will not bar the child from enrolling in or attending school, and 2) explain for what purpose the number will be used. The Rankin County School District does not require EL families to provide a social security number to enroll in or attend school.

RCSD may need to contact the former school district (if the student attended another school within Mississippi), if parents do not have student immunization records available. The dates of immunization may be obtained by calling the previous school that the child attended. If necessary, students can begin the immunization series at the local public health department. RCSD works collaboratively with community and area agencies to facilitate the school enrollment process.

During the enrollment process the parents or guardians must show picture identification. The following forms of identification are acceptable:

- immigration documents with picture ID
- passport
- driver's license
- state issued identification
- Visa

The following information may also be collected during the time of enrollment:

- Student's Birth Certificate (or records that indicate a foreign place of birth)
- Current 121 Form (Certificate of Immunization Compliance) – Students do not need a social security number or a physical address to get this. Students will be given a grace period to obtain an appointment for their immunization records. RCSD will assist families in obtaining the updated MS immunization record.

- Proof of Residency – May include Lease, Mortgage, Affidavit (approved by County Office), bills (could include deposits for utilities, may take 30 days to obtain the first statement). The bill should be brought to the school as soon as it is available. Lack of residency proof should not prevent students from registering; they will be enrolled pending submission of necessary documents.
- Grades or paperwork from previous schools.

RCSD does not turn away students if they have proof they live within the boundaries of the school district and must enroll all students regardless of their or their parents/guardians actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status.

IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT

To effectively serve EL students and make appropriate educational decisions, procedures are necessary for the identification, assessment, and placement of these students. The Rankin County School District follows the five-step process for identifying and placing an EL student in an appropriate program that assures the student an equitable, quality education.

- Step 1 – Identification - Home Language Survey
- Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency
- Step 3 – Parental Notification
- Step 3A – Notification of Parental Rights and Participation
- Step 4 – Program Placement
- Step 4A – EL Data Entry
- Step 5 – Developing a Language Service Plan
- Step 6 – Implementation of English Language Service Plan
- Step 7 – Student Evaluation

Step 1- Home Language Survey (HLS)

Educational decision making for ELs requires procedures for identification, assessment, and proper program placement. English Learners are identified by responses to the ***Home Language Survey*** (HLS), which is included in the Rankin County School District's Registration/Enrollment process. Enrollment documents are completed at the beginning of each school year and/or at the time of initial enrollment. The following items are contained on the Home Language Survey:

- First language child learned to speak
- Language the child most often speaks
- Language most often spoken in the child's home

If any response on the HLS indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home, then further assessment (ELPA21 Screener) is conducted by the school's EL teacher to determine the student's English-language proficiency level.

A copy of the HLS will be given to the EL teacher and the completed HLS becomes part of the student's permanent record and are available for future reference, and the school official enrolling the students will complete the following:

1. Secure EL student's educational history
 - a. When the student first enrolled in U.S. schools (captured in MSIS)
 - b. Request cumulative records from previous school(s) attended, if applicable
 - c. Whether or not the student received EL instruction (documentation from previous school.)
2. Refer student name, Home Language Survey, and any pertinent information to the school's EL teacher
3. Request/arrange for an interpreter if needed to complete the enrollment process
4. Ensure that the Home Language Survey information becomes a part of the student's permanent record.

The identification and placement of ELs in an appropriate language program that assures them of an equitable, quality education is a four-step process in the Rankin County School District:

- Home Language Survey
- Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency
- Parental Notification
- Program Placement

Step 2 – Initial Assessment of Language Proficiency

If any response on the Home Language Survey (HLS) indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or individual in the home or other person during the registration process, then additional assessment is conducted in the Rankin County School District to determine the student's English-language proficiency level. The ELPA21 Screener is conducted to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement decisions. Potential EL students identified by the HLS during registration during the beginning of the school year are assessed for English-language proficiency within **30 calendar days** of enrollment.

Potential EL students who register after the beginning of the school year are assessed (ELPA21 Screener) within **10 school days** of enrollment. The ELPA21 Screener assesses the proficiency of students in all four language domains (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Those administering and scoring the placement screener are certified teachers and/or bilingual teachers who receive professional development training. The student's placement screener report will be placed in their permanent record.

Each school's EL teacher will ensure the Home Language Survey is to be placed in the student's permanent record. In addition, the school's EL teacher will ensure that a copy of the results of the *MDE-adopted English Language Proficiency Assessment Placement Test* (ELPA21 Screener) *results and the Language Service Plan (LSP)* are placed in the student's cumulative record.

Step 3 – Parental Notification

Prior to the initial placement of a student in a language instruction educational program, RCSD notifies the student's parents or guardians. Any parent or guardian whose child is receiving or is eligible to receive EL services has the right to decline or opt his or her child out of any or all EL services in the Rankin County School District. The district does not recommend or encourage a parent or guardian to opt a child out of the EL program or services for any reason. RCSD provides guidance in a language parents or guardians can understand to ensure that they understand their child's rights, the range of EL services that their child could receive, and the benefits of such services. This is done to ensure that any parent or guardian's decision to opt out is informed and voluntary.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, parents of English Learners must be informed about Every *Student Succeeds Act* and their rights under the law. Under *ESSA*, parents of English language learners can expect the following:

- To have their child receive a quality education and be taught by a highly effective teacher.
- To have their children learn English and other subjects such as reading, language arts, and mathematics at the same academic levels as all other students.
- To know if their child has been identified and recommended for placement in an English language acquisition program, and to accept or refuse such placement.
- To choose a different English language acquisition program for their child, if one is available.
- To have their child tested annually to assess his or her progress in English language acquisition.
- To receive information regarding their child's performance on academic tests.
- To have their child taught with programs that are evidence based.
- To have the opportunity for their child to reach his or her greatest academic potential.

The Rankin County School District provides written notification to parents or guardians of their child's recommended placement in an EL program within 30 days of the start of the school year (or within 10 days for later-arriving students). The notification includes all of the required elements, including the right to opt out. Appropriate documentation is retained to demonstrate that a parent or guardian knowingly and voluntarily opted his/her child out of EL programs or particular EL services. In RCSD, opting out of EL services or the EL program does not affect a student's ability to participate in any other programs or services, such as special education services.

If a parent or a guardian decides to opt his or her child out of EL services or the EL program, that child retains his or her status as an EL. The Rankin County School District remains obligated to take affirmative steps and appropriate action required by civil rights laws to provide the EL student meaningful access to its educational program. RCSD continues to monitor periodically the opted-out students' academic progress.

If and when RCSD finds that a student is struggling, the district takes appropriate steps to assist the student. These steps include reassessing the student's ELP using the screener; notifying the student's parent or guardian about his or her child's lack of progress and encouraging him or her

to opt the child into EL programs and services; and providing supports for the student's language acquisition, such as offering professional development (PD) to support the acquisition of English language to the student's core curriculum teachers.

The ELs who opt out of services must, like those receiving programs or services, have their ELP reassessed yearly during the annual English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) period. After it is determined that the EL student no longer qualifies as an EL, the school's EL teacher and the mainstream teacher continues to monitor the student for at least 4 years.

Step 3A - Notification of Parental Rights and Participation

The Rankin County School District provides information in an effective manner and applicable language, inclusive of letters, flyers, newsletters, parent meetings, etc., on how parents:

- Can be involved in the education of their children,
- Can be active participants in assisting their children to learn English and achieve the state's high standards in core academic subjects, and
- Can participate in meetings to formulate and respond to concerns or recommendations from parents of English Learners.

RCSD provides information to parents with limited English proficiency, "to the extent practicable," in a language parents can understand, whenever practicable, written translations of printed information is provided to parents with limited English proficiency in a language they understand. However, if written translations are not available, RCSD provides information to EL parents orally in a language they can understand. The Rankin County School District uses the *TransAct* program (www.transact.com) that is provided through the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), and/or other suitable language translation programs to provide parent notifications translated in a language that parents can easily understand.

Step 4 – Program Placement

ELs come to school not only to learn how to communicate socially, but to become academically proficient in English. Learning social English is just the tip of the iceberg. Just because they can speak on the playground, talk to peers, and use every day English does not mean that they are up to speed in academic English. To the contrary, these ELs are not yet proficient enough to handle the standards-based curriculum. They lack academic vocabulary needed to develop the content knowledge in English that they will need to succeed in future schooling. In the Rankin County School District, we recognize these types of deficits. It is the goal of the district to expedite ELs academic English through a language education program, provide access to academic content, provide staff to support EL students, ensure meaningful communication with parents of ELs, and provide ELs with access to other program services.

In the Rankin County School District, ELs are placed in an educational program at the age-appropriate grade level. One important reason for age-appropriate placement is socio-cultural. Students' progress faster and work harder when they are with their peers. In addition, classroom

teachers are organized to teach students of a certain age and have educational expectations appropriate for students of that age group.

RCSD does not place ELs in special education classes on the assumption that the materials and teaching methods in those classes would be better for them than sitting in classes where they cannot understand the instruction. This type of placement violates the students' rights to educational opportunities that take advantage of their true capabilities.

After ELs have been identified using the ELPA21 Screener, the Rankin County School District provides ELs with appropriate language assistance services and programs, commonly known as "EL services and programs." The Rankin County School District chooses the EL services and programs that meet the civil rights requirements and best meet the needs of the EL population. Appropriate EL services are provided in the Rankin County School District to ELs until they are proficient in English and can participate meaningfully in educational programs without EL support. This includes continuing to provide EL services to ELs at the highest levels of English proficiency until they have exited from EL services and programs.

The goal for students who are ELs in the Rankin County School District is that they attain fluency in English, master the state's academic content standards as demonstrated by proficiency on the state's required student assessments, and pass any other state required tests. Research related to student placement and retention shows that ELs must be placed age appropriately in the general education classroom.

This provides them with access to challenging, grade-level content instruction, and the opportunity to interact with their English-speaking peers. This setting is considered generally to be the least restrictive educational environment. At the high school level, credits are considered based on transcripts provided by the students/parents/guardians, even if the coursework was taken in another country. If transcripts are in a language other than English, translations are sought within the district so that credits can be considered.

Step 4A – EL Data Entry

Accuracy of EL data is of the utmost importance in the Rankin County School District. Once a student has been identified as an EL the school and district ensures the student is correctly marked in their student data package. This information uploads to MSIS once the school and district has submitted their data to the Mississippi Department of Education. RCSD's MSIS Director ensures each column on the EL roster screen of MSIS is completed. This information is checked monthly for accuracy.

Step 5 – Developing a Language Service Plan

The Rankin County School District requires each student designated as an EL to have a Language Service Plan (LSP), which is updated annually until the student exits the EL program. The Student Evaluation Team (SET) meets to develop the LSP at the beginning of each academic school year. This team is composed of teachers (including EL teachers), administrators, counselors, and parents or guardians. The team meets quarterly to evaluate the student's progress and make necessary

adjustments. A copy of the LSP is provided to all teachers who work with the EL student. The LSP contains the following:

- Student's demographic information
- Date of first enrollment in a U.S. school
- Yearly ELPT scores
- Classroom accommodations
- State testing accommodations
- Signatures of SET members

Step 6 – Implementation of English Language Service Plan

In the Rankin County School District, each student designated as an EL must have an English Language Service Plan (LSP), which is updated annually until the student achieves Former Limited English Proficiency (FLEP) status.

In the Rankin County School District, the Student Evaluation Team (SET) is a school team responsible for guiding and monitoring the placement, services, and assessment of students who are ELs. The EL Committee is comprised of, at the minimum, the school's EL teacher, the student's teacher(s), a school counselor and administrator, the district EL director, and a parent representative, if needed.

In RCSD, the SET uses the following guidelines in implementing the LSP:

1. Ensure full consideration of each student's language background before placement in an English language instruction educational program.
2. Ensure implementation of systematic procedures and safeguards related to appropriateness of identification, placement, assessment, instructional and support programs, and program exit.
3. Review student's progress in language acquisition and academic achievement annually.
4. Convene as needed to discuss changes or adjustments in the EL's instructional services.
5. Identify accommodations needed on state assessments. Additional classroom strategies and accommodations should be identified, as appropriate.
6. Communicate in a timely manner the student's LSP with faculty and staff who interact with and provide instruction for the child.
7. Ensure the LSP describes how the school will communicate with the student's parents in their native language.
8. Determine and record the date of placement into the LEA's alternate English Language Development Program to establish the student's "Length of time in the EL Program".
9. Please note that the distinction between "date first enrolled" (which is the date of registration) and date to establish "length of time in LEP/EL Program" (which is the date student is first determined to be EL) are two different dates.
10. Make all necessary changes to the LSP by the end of the first semester. This will ensure that students are utilizing the necessary testing accommodations that are provided through the LSP.

Step 7 – Student Evaluation

The Rankin County School District continuously monitor students by and through the SET Team. That team reviews: daily classroom instruction, benchmark assessments, daily attendance, behavior, interventions, and evaluates each EL student annually during the designated time frame as established by the Mississippi Department of Education. Student progress is tracked via the ***MDE-Adopted English Language Proficiency Assessment***, classroom grades, and all required state assessments. In RCSD, EL students are expected to meet the same academic requirements as other students; however, more time may be provided for EL students to meet the standards. All EL students participate in the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP).

PLACEMENT FOR NEWLY ARRIVED SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS

When a student enrolls in U.S. schools for the first time at the secondary level, careful consideration is given to the student's course schedule to ensure the student has access to a high school diploma while enrolled in the Rankin County School District. To ensure ELs have access to the foundational skills needed to be successful in high school and ensure that they graduate from high school ready for college and career, RCSD places students in academic courses sequentially.

Students are given an opportunity to take all courses needed for graduation. Students must take the required assessments at the time they are enrolled in the corresponding courses, and they may not skip courses to avoid state assessments in RCSD. For example, English I, II, III and IV must be offered, scheduled and taught in sequential order. While courses cannot be scheduled or taken out of sequence, simultaneous enrollment is acceptable in situations where a student failed a course and needs to simultaneously enroll in two courses to graduate on time. For example, if a student has not met the requirements as outlined by MDE to receive a Carnegie for English III, they can take English III and English IV their senior year to graduate on time.

ASSESSING ENGLISH LEARNERS

Federal Regulations

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that the Local Education Agency (LEA) must assess all ELs using the annual English language proficiency assessment, including those students whose parents have declined to enroll them in, or had them removed from, Language Instruction Education Programs (LIEPs). Additionally, all ELs enrolled in schools served by the State must be assessed annually using the State's English language proficiency assessment. [ESEA Section 1111(b)(2)(G)]. "State or district assessment policies, if they include a right to opt a child out of assessments, do not override or diminish the LEA's obligation to assess 100 percent of ELs using the annual English language proficiency assessment."

English Language Proficiency Test

The ELPA21 is administered to ELs in the Rankin County School District. It is a secure, large-scale, English language proficiency assessment administered to kindergarten through 12th grade

students who have been identified as ELs. This assessment is administered annually in the spring to assess each EL's progress in acquiring academic English in RCSD. The ELPA21 incorporates both English Language Arts (ELA) standards of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards and English Language Development Standards to measure each student's English language proficiency level and growth.

English Language Proficiency Testing Basics

As mandated by ESEA, EL students in the Rankin County School District are tested in four domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The Listening domain assesses the student's response to a variety of audio passages. The Speaking domain assesses the student's production of grammar and vocabulary as used in social and academic language. The Reading domain assesses the student's reading comprehension based on responses to multiple-choice questions about passages, tables, charts, and illustrations. Lastly, the Writing domain assesses the student's ability to produce grade-level appropriate words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Accommodations on State Academic Assessments

Reasonable accommodations are provided by the Rankin County School District on assessments administered to ELs. In the current edition of the *Mississippi Testing Accommodations Manual*, accommodations are available for students who have been officially identified as ELs. RCSD strives to ensure that the use of accommodations deemed appropriate for ELs on any state assessment do not deny ELs the opportunity to fully participate in the assessment and allows the students to receive benefits equal to those received by never-ELs. If an EL cannot be assessed on the ELPA21 in RCSD in one or more domain of the English Language Proficiency Test due to a disability, and there is no appropriate accommodation, the student's English language proficiency will be based on the domain that can be assessed.

ELPA21 has developed an alternate assessment for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Alt ELPA was designed and developed by educators, states, and accessibility experts. The Alt ELPA is a standards-aligned assessment for this student population.

EXITING STUDENTS

On June 19, 2025, the Mississippi State Board of Education revised the ELPT exit criteria for English learners (EL) and are effective immediately.

- For an English learner to officially exit EL status, the student is required to obtain a Proficiency Determination of "Proficient" on the **ELPA21 Summative Assessment**. A score of "Proficient" means that the student has scored a proficiency level 4 or higher in all language domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing).
- For an **English learner with significant cognitive disabilities (ELSCD)** to officially exit EL status, the student is required to obtain a Proficiency Determination of "Proficient" on the **Alt ELPA21 Summative Assessment**. A score of "Proficient" means that the student has scored a proficiency level 3 or higher in each domain in both language modalities (Receptive and Expressive).

Because ESSA requires states to have uniform exit criteria, the Rankin County School District does not add other criteria as exit requirements. In RCSD, an EL with a disability can be “exited” from EL status when he or she no longer meets the definition of an EL. This occurs when the student meets the State’s definition of “proficient” in English.

However, there is no provision in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that would authorize the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team to remove the “EL” designation before the student has attained English proficiency. In addition, RCSD or RCSD school personnel do not have the authority under Federal law to remove a student’s EL designation before the student has been deemed proficient in English solely because the student has an IEP.

MONITORING STUDENTS

After students have exited EL status, RCSD monitors their academic progress for at least 4 years. Monitoring is conducted and documented every 9 weeks, with a SET team reviewing monitored students’ grades, assessments and other related data in the Rankin County School District. If an exited EL is not progressing academically as expected and monitoring suggests there are still deficiencies with the acquisition of English language, RCSD re-tests the student using the ELPA21 Screener to see if the student needs to be offered additional language acquisition services. In no case is re-testing of an exited student’s ELP prohibited in the Rankin County School District. If the student re-enters EL services, however, RCSD documents the reasons why, as well as obtain the parent’s consent prior to reentry.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS PROVIDED TO ELs

An alternative language program has been developed to meet the needs of the EL student based on the *Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)-Adopted English Language Placement Assessment* (ELPA21). This factors along with any other pertinent input from the student’s teacher and SET team is used in the Rankin County School District to determine the appropriate instructional approach, modifications, and accommodations for EL students.

Pull-Out Program Approach (Phonics based, structured literacy, science of reading, and subject area content-based English language acquisition, if applicable)

After ELs have been identified using the ELPA21 Screener, the Rankin County School District provides ELs with appropriate English language acquisition services. The Rankin County School District also provides EL students with access to the content of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards.

The Rankin County School District supports placing EL students at their appropriate grade level or no lower than one grade below grade level depending on the needs of the EL student and depending on the results of the ELPA21 Screener. Appropriate modifications and accommodations for the student are made in the classroom and monitored by teachers in the Rankin County School District. All EL students can participate in all academic and special programs offered by the district. Instruction is directly related to the content of subjects such as math, language arts,

science, etc. In addition, EL students receive small group instruction with the assistance of an EL teacher, peer tutoring, and if available, summer enrichment, as needed.

Classroom accommodations and modifications that meet the EL student's language and academic needs are provided in the Rankin County School District.

Students in RCSD receive small group and individualized instruction to further their English language acquisition through the standards-based instruction that is aligned with frameworks, as well as the submersion of English language acquisition and content-based English. At the secondary level in RCSD, an emphasis is placed on the acquisition of subject area content, as well as content-based English, and the submersion of English language acquisition. As necessary, the EL student is assigned a peer tutor and is allowed to use Word-to-Word glossaries and the use of technology resources.

Each year in RCSD, administrators and teachers discuss the effective methods for ensuring that our EL students are making progress in acquiring language skills, as well as in academic content knowledge. All EL students receive individual or small group instruction for an amount of time that is commensurable with the results of the ELPA21 Assessment and as indicated in the student's Language Service Plan (LSP). This instruction is not limited to only English language acquisition but may incorporate supplemental support through vocabulary development by implementing the pull-out program approach.

The pull-out program approach may be individual or in small groups of students with similar language acquisition levels. This supplemental service is scheduled during times that are the least disruptive to the EL student's general classroom participation in RCSD. The EL teachers as part of the supplemental service use materials to support the acquisition of English language and subject area content with students. In addition, supplemental program materials are shared with the general classroom teachers to ensure that language acquisitions activities are smoothly implemented. The EL teacher develops an individual plan for instruction for each student that includes support through supplemental program materials, vocabulary development, listening, speaking, and writing activities, as well as total reading comprehension in the Rankin County School District.

General education classroom teachers in RCSD implement an instructional plan for each EL student that includes appropriate classroom accommodations and modifications. The teacher adapts or modifies the content material to the level of the student's understanding correlated with his/her level of English proficiency. Teacher observations, conducted by school administrators in RCSD, provide insight into the student's abilities as well as academic levels. The goal of our program is to include the EL students in the general classroom academic setting to enhance student participation and nurture a culture of acceptance.

HELPING ENGLISH LEARNERS ACCESS ACADEMIC CONTENT

In the Rankin County School District, ELs have meaningful access to the core curriculum, such as math, science, social studies and language arts, while learning English. While the district's EL program focuses in part on language acquisition, both EL teachers and general classroom teachers

work together to ensure that students are mastering the academic language needed to be successful. Every classroom teacher who serves ELs works to help ELs make sense of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards, regardless of language proficiency. As part of this expectation, teachers incorporate a variety of EL strategies into instructional planning to help students with the comprehension of academic content in the Rankin County School District. Teachers use visual supports to help build student understanding. Some common visual supports used by classroom teachers in RCSD include the following:

- Photos or Illustrations
- Videos
- Picture Books
- Audio Books
- Charts
- Graphs
- Diagrams
- Thinking Maps and Graphic Organizers
- Manipulatives
- Labels
- Models
- Gesturing/Pantomime
- Realia (bringing in the “real” item being discussed)
- Anchor Charts
- Translations in the Native Language (for students who read in their native language)
- Simplified text in English
- Bilingual and Bilingual Picture Dictionaries

Additionally, teachers in RCSD understand the basic communication strategies that are to be used with ELs. All teachers and paraprofessionals who work with ELs in any capacity recognize that they need to speak slowly and clearly (not loudly). Educators in RCSD are aware that ELs typically need additional processing time when being introduced to new material or being asked to respond to questions. RCSD teachers also recognize the value that collaborative learning has for ELs, including strategies such as assigning peer tutors and language buddies for assignments with high-language demands, think-pair-share activities and the incorporation of sentence starters, sentence frames and word banks to support production during collaboration.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework for effective team-based problem solving that is data informed, evidence-based, and flexible enough to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. With MTSS, RCSD identifies struggling students, monitors student progress, provides evidence-based interventions, and adjusts the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness. RCSD also identifies students with learning disabilities or other disabilities. When an EL, who is actively receiving support from an EL program, is observed by the general education teacher to have continuing difficulties with learning, the first course of action in the Rankin County School District is to consult informally

with the EL teacher/specialist to request additional instructional strategies for teaching. The EL teacher will:

1. Offer new suggestions;
2. Request to observe the student in the classroom; or
3. Check with the entire team of teachers to see if the student is struggling in more than one class.

If the student continues to struggle, the next option in the RCSD is to refer the student to the Teacher Support Team (TST) for possible intervention. It is essential that the EL teacher be involved or consulted at each step of the tier process. This is imperative before making recommendations for intervention strategies. Teams collaboratively determine if the general education teachers' instructional techniques are known to be effective with ELs, as well as whether teachers have implemented the recommended EL instructional accommodations.

GRADING SCALE

As students are working to learn English during the initial stages of language acquisition, it is a violation of their Civil Rights to retain them due to limited language proficiency. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), RCSD ensures that EL students are placed appropriately and can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. The Rankin County School District takes the necessary steps to ensure that students are not retained solely because they are still in the early stages of learning English. Students who receive extensive language supports and classroom accommodations have this information noted on their report cards, and accommodations are shared with the families of EL students to ensure that they have an understanding of true academic performance in English language proficiency in the Rankin County School District.

The Rankin County School District adheres to the School Board approved Grading and Assessment Systems Policy (IHA). In addition, EL students with ELPT Overall levels (1-3) receive no recorded grade lower than 60 and receive modified classwork and tests. Both are modified so that the work is on the student's ability and/or grade level. Classwork and tests may be read aloud, shortened, or given in a different format to students who qualify for EL services.

Teachers use common general education criteria for assigning grades for EL students who score Level 4-5 (proficient and above proficient) on the ELPA21 Assessment since English proficiency is not a barrier. For students who score proficient and above proficient in (Reading, Writing, and Overall) on the ELPA21 Assessment are exited from the EL program and do not receive modified grading of failing grades.

GRADING, RETENTION, EXITING, AND MONITORING OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

Grading English Learners

In order to ensure consistency and accountability, the procedure below is suggested when assigning grades to ELs. However, LEAs may develop common criteria for grading ELs that is used consistently throughout the LEA.

No failing grade(s) may be given in PowerSchool, on progress reports, on report cards, and cumulative folders for the final grade for each nine-week period, semester, or end of the year grade because ELs are still in the development stage of language proficiency.

When students are still receiving EL services and have scored a Level 1, 2, or 3 on their English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) they are considered an EL student and should not receive failing grades. However, if it has been established that English is not a barrier, students are not in their early development stages of language proficiency and are not putting forth their best effort to complete assignments they may need to receive additional support through the Tier Process.

Recommended Steps:

- Review academic and behavior data in a TST meeting.
- Determine if Tier II or Tier III supports are needed at this time.
- Contact the Language and Intervention Specialist to review intervention and classroom data.
- Ensure classroom teachers are documenting the students' actual grades and their attempts to get students to complete their work.
- Request professional development training from the EL Teacher or Language and Intervention Specialist to ensure classroom teachers and special education teachers can best support EL students in their content areas.

Once the documentation of the tier supports has been put in place please reach out to the Language and Intervention Specialist to review all available information. At that time, it can be determined whether the student may receive grades below a 60.

ELPA21 Levels 1 - 3 (Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate)

- ❖ K -2nd grade: Actual formative and summative grade(s) should be at least an "N" along with a comment that says, "with EL accommodations." A "U" should not be placed on the report card during the first semester. During the third and fourth teachers may put a "U" if there is a possible retention. (An EL student receiving a "U" should be in the tier process and receiving tiered intervention supports. The retention should not put them more than one year behind their peers. Meetings should be conducted with parents and teachers to discuss all of the available resources, interventions, and instruction.)
- ❖ 3rd-12th grade: Actual formative and summative grades may be used with a comment that says, "with EL accommodations." (The specific accommodation should be included as it is listed on the LSP.)
- ❖ Teachers are to manually override the letter and number grade in (**Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, S1, S2, and Y1**) of EL students who are **Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3** (these are the same students that the EL teacher pulls and works with), to no failing grade(s) in PowerSchool.
- ❖ EL students are to receive modified classwork and tests as noted on their Language Service Plan (LSP). Both should be modified so that the work is on the student's ability and/or

grade level. Classwork and test may also be read aloud, shortened, or given in a different format to students who qualify for EL services for students that are **Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 as noted on their LSP.**

ELPA21 Levels 4 - 5 (Early Advanced and Advanced)

- ❖ Teachers should use the common general education criteria for assigning grades since English proficiency is not a barrier.
- ❖ Students who score early advanced and advanced in (Reading, Writing, and Overall) on the ELPA21 Assessment are exited from the EL program and do not receive modified grading of no failing grades.

* Identification of EL status does not begin until Kindergarten. Therefore, Pre-K students are not marked in PowerSchool, progress report, report card, nor cumulative folder as EL their entire year of Pre-Kindergarten. *

See Board Policy IHA: A standard numerical grading system shall be implemented and maintained in the district. Grade frequencies shall be as follows:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

* This grading scale shall be applied when calculating grade point averages for all students graduating after July 2009; hence it is being applied retroactively.

Exceptions:

Kindergarten and First Grade will issue a standards-based report card marked as follows:

S = Satisfactory; can work independently with at least 70% accuracy; learning is at appropriate pace

N = Needs Improvement; learning but not making appropriate progress; below average performance

U = Progress not adequate for age level; performance level in failing range

* Teachers will schedule at least two conferences with the parent/ guardian of each kindergarten student during the year.

Second Grade will issue a standards-based report card marked as follows:

E = Excellent; can work independently with 90-100% accuracy; exceeding the standard

S = Satisfactory; can work independently with 70-89% accuracy; learning is at appropriate pace; meeting the standard

N = Needs Improvement; can work independently with 60-69% accuracy; learning but not making adequate progress

U = progress not adequate for age level; performance level in failing range

Third Grade – Social Studies and Science Grades:

E = Excellent; Advanced performance; Exceeds standard; approximates an A

S = Satisfactory; Average to Proficient performance; Meets standard; correlates with B and C work

N = Needs Improvement; below mastery level but learning; approximates a D
U = Minimal level of understanding of the concepts/skills; failing performance

Retention of English Learners (3rd Grade Mississippi Academic Assessment Program - Reading)

Federal requirements mandate that districts take affirmative steps to open their educational programs to national origin-minority group students. This means that while ELs must meet the same educational requirements as other students, these requirements must be presented in a manner appropriate to ELs' cultural and linguistic needs and in a period, that facilitates their learning.

Legally, the RCSD is required to accommodate the EL in a way that allows the student to benefit from the educational experience. The student cannot be penalized for his/her lack of the English language. A valid interpretation would mean that a student's final grade should never be given the grade of "F" when the student's lack of success can be attributed to limited English proficiency.

Modifications of instructional methods and assessments are recommended **for** grade-level content material. (Possibilities include shorter tests, read alouds, oral responses, and pictorial responses, etc.) However, for statewide assessments to be in compliance with ESSA, lower grade-level testing is not permitted.

Retention is generally not recommended for ELs. Though the decision to promote or retain must be made on a case-by-case basis, any decision to retain an EL must be accompanied by documentation demonstrating that appropriate accommodations and modifications were employed throughout the year to assure compliance with Federal requirements. LEAs will follow the Tier Process as outlined in the [MTSS Overview Document](#) to ensure all students are receiving the appropriate level of intervention and support

ELs should be carefully evaluated before retention is recommended to ensure that lack of English skills is not being mistaken for poor achievement. Considerations that reduce the need to retain EL students include:

- remedial programs,
- tutoring,
- summer enrichment programs,
- instructional aides,
- peer tutoring,
- [Adapting Classroom Assessments for English Learners](#)

MISSISSIPPI ENGLISH LEARNER STANDARDS

The Mississippi Department of Education has adopted the MS-ELP Standards and the state's current ELPT is aligned to these standards. The Mississippi Department of Education has also adopted the MS Alternate English Language Proficiency Standards to support English Language acquisition for ELs with significant cognitive disabilities. The Rankin County School District is currently using these newly adopted standards.

STAFFING AND SUPPORTING AN ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRAM

Recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified educators is essential to ensuring that any EL program model is effective. The Rankin County School District hires an adequate number of teachers who are qualified to provide EL services, and core-content teachers who meet requirements in their field are trained to specifically support EL students.

The Rankin County School District hires EL teachers who are qualified, certified, and/or are bilingual to teach ELs. EL teachers obtain the necessary training, either through the Mississippi Department of Education provided professional development or through training provided through the Rankin County School District. Even when teachers already hold an ESL license, RCSD provides teachers and paraprofessionals with ongoing PD designed to improve effectiveness. All EL staff, including bilingual staff are required to speak English proficiently in RCSD.

ENSURING MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PARENTS

The Rankin County School District communicates meaningfully with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents and families and to adequately notify them of information about any program, service or activity called to the attention of non-LEP parents. RCSD realizes that successful communication provides LEP parents, guardians, and families with the school-related information they need to make informed decisions about, and be helpful participants in, their children's education. This may include but not be limited to information about language assistance programs, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, requests for parent or guardian permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, gifted programs, and magnet and charter schools.

RCSD implements a clear process for determining (1) if parents and guardians have limited English proficiency, (2) what their primary language is, and (3) what their language needs are. An LEA may use a student registration form, such as the HLS, to inquire about whether a parent or guardian requires oral and/or written communication in a language other than English. Translated copies of the HLS into languages that are common in the school and surrounding community are provided to parents of the Rankin County School District. Schools in RCSD must take parents at their word about their communication need if they request language assistance. Schools in RCSD also understand that parents or guardians may not be proficient in English, even if their child is.

The Rankin County School District provides language assistance to LEP parents effectively with appropriate, competent staff or appropriate and competent outside resources. To provide these services, RCSD may survey or canvass staff to see if they are trained and qualified to provide effective language assistance or obtain qualified interpreters and translators if staff is unqualified or if additional staffing support is needed. The district ensures translators are familiar with the language used in school communication and all interpreters and translators sign a confidentiality agreement. RCSD will use a language phone line to provide interpretation services on an as needed

basis. Students, siblings, friends and untrained staff members are not considered qualified translators or interpreters, even if they are bilingual. All interpreters and translators, including staff acting in this capacity, must be proficient in both English and the target language; have knowledge of specialized educational terms or concepts in both languages; and be trained in the role of an interpreter or translator, and the ethics of interpreting and translating, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of maintaining student, family and staff confidentiality in the Rankin County School District.

TOOL FOR TRANSLATING FEDERALLY MANDATED DOCUMENTS

In Mississippi, one tool for providing translated notices to families is the online system TransACT. All Mississippi public school staff with email addresses can access the system, which provides hundreds of translated, ESSA-aligned forms and notifications. TransACT can be accessed at www.transact.com.

Additionally, Title I of ESEA, as amended by ESSA now requires education agencies to conduct effective outreach to parents, guardians and families of ELs. This requirement includes outreach for regular meetings attended by non-EL families.

Building strong relationships between families and schools in RCSD typically occurs over time, and these relationships can be established and nurtured in numerous ways, which go well beyond the basic requirements of translation and interpreter services. District leaders and school personnel in the Rankin County School District understand the cultures of LEP families and integrate the culture of LEP families into school life. RCSD fosters relationships by inviting families to volunteer in the school and encouraging families to help children integrate their cultural and linguistic traditions into school assignments and other curricular and extracurricular activities.

ENGLISH LEARNERS AND ACCESS TO OTHER PROGRAM SERVICES

Services for ELs in the Rankin County School District represent a continuum of available programs and students are not denied access to programs due to language proficiency. The EL students who meet criteria are eligible for a variety of other specialized program services, including gifted education, advanced placement, dual credit and other advanced courses; MTSS, special education services, migrant and immigrant programs, and services for homeless students in the Rankin County School District.

GIFTED EDUCATION

EL students may possess extraordinary learning or performance abilities that have nothing to do with their language proficiency. Procedures used in RCSD for identifying students who are gifted are bias-free and culturally equitable as possible, while also being consistent with the requirements set for other gifted students in the Rankin County School District. These procedures are designed to highlight student strengths and abilities, regardless of their native language or dominant language use.

Students who are identified gifted may still receive EL services until they qualify for exiting EL status in the Rankin County School District. The time spent in the development of English proficiency does not take precedence over appropriate instruction and learning in the student's areas of strength and talent in RCSD. For example, a mathematically gifted, non-English proficient student still receives advanced and accelerated mathematics instruction and opportunities to perform at optimal levels. The language of instruction serves the optimal development of the student's mathematics ability. The student spends as much quality time in high-level mathematics learning and production as would a highly English proficient, mathematically gifted student in the Rankin County School District.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT, DUAL CREDIT, AND OTHER ADVANCED COURSES

In addition to gifted education, EL students are also provided with access to Advanced Placement, dual credit, and other advanced courses in the Rankin County School District. ELs receive language supports to assist them in accessing academic content, just as they would if they were in other less accelerated academic courses in RCSD.

GUIDELINES FOR EL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) address the rights of students with disabilities in school and other educational settings. If an EL is suspected of having one or more disabilities, RCSD evaluates the EL promptly to determine if the EL has a disability or disabilities and whether the EL needs disability-related services. Disability evaluations are not delayed because of a student's limited English language proficiency or the student's participation in an EL program in the Rankin County School District. Also, a student's English language proficiency is not the basis for identifying a student for special education in RCSD.

It is important for educators in RCSD to accurately assess whether ELs are eligible for special education services. Appropriate disability identification processes that evaluate the student's disability related educational needs and not the student's English language skills will help school personnel to accurately identify students in need of disability-related services. In addition, RCSD ensures that a student's special education evaluation is provided and administered in the student's dominant language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information about what the student knows and can do, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. Assessing whether a student has a disability in his or her native language or other mode of communication can help educators in RCSD determine whether a need stems from lack of English language proficiency or a student's disability-related needs.

When an EL student is determined to have a disability in RCSD, the student's EL and disability-related educational needs are both met. For EL students, in addition to the required IEP team participants under IDEA, it is essential that the IEP team include participants who have knowledge of the student's language needs. It is also important that the IEP team include professionals with training, and preferably expertise, in second language acquisition in the Rankin County School District.

There are steps that must be taken to help prevent overidentification of ELs in special education. When a student is having difficulty mastering specific skills, it is important for the teacher to accommodate the instructional strategies and pace of instruction for the student. If the student continues to have difficulty after consistent language accommodations and Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, the student must be referred to the Student Evaluation Team (SET) along with the TST. The EL professional is a member of the TST in the Rankin County School District.

Several factors can be considered when deciding whether a student may be referred for special education testing in RCSD. These include the following:

- Entry date in the United States
- Years of consistent schooling
- Educational history, including years in U.S. schools and consistency of education
- Prior evaluation results
- Physical conditions that might account for difficulties, including need for glasses or hearing aids
- School attendance
- Input from parents, guardians, and families.

After this information is reviewed, one of two things may happen:

1. The TST may recommend additional interventions and accommodations for the classroom.
2. The SET team can then make a referral for special education testing to determine if the student has a specific disability. Once a referral is made, testing is completed to determine if the student qualifies as a student with a disability under IDEA.

It is important to note that the parent, guardian, or the TST team may request a comprehensive assessment be completed at any time, which would then require a Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) meeting within 14 days to determine whether a comprehensive evaluation must be completed at this time.

Specific procedures for special education assessment are provided in the Mississippi Policies and Procedures Regarding Children with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004 (2009). As noted earlier, proficiency assessment in both English and the child's first language can identify the dominant language for further evaluation and assessment if needed. Nonverbal tests are another alternative.

Disability evaluations may not be delayed because of a student's limited English language proficiency (ELP) or the student's participation in a language instruction educational program (LIEP). Also, a student's ELP cannot be the basis for determining that a student has a disability.

All students who qualify for services under IDEA, regardless of the type or degree of disability, share certain rights and needs, including:

- The right to a free and appropriate public education

- The right to an IEP specifying the student's unique needs along with the special education and related services the student is to receive
- The need to have cognitive, linguistic, academic, and social/emotional characteristics considered and appropriate environmental modifications or accommodations made

MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

An EL is eligible to receive migrant education program (MEP) services if they meet the definition of “migratory child” and if the basis for their eligibility is properly recorded on a certificate of eligibility (COE) or other written or electronic form in the Rankin County School District. The district has a copy of the migrant survey in the registration packet. Any survey indicating potential migrant status, is submitted to the Mississippi Migrant Education Service Center. The term “migratory child” is defined in section 1309(2) of the statute and section 200.81(d) of the regulations. Determining whether a child meets this definition is often difficult and depends on a recruiter’s assessment of information presented by a parent or other family member, guardian, or other individual responsible for the child.

According to sections 1115(b)(1)(A) (incorporated into the MEP program by sections 1304(c)(2)) and 1309(2) of the statute and §§ 200.81(e) and 200.103(a) of the regulations, a child is a “migratory child” and is eligible for MEP services if all the following conditions are met:

1. The child is not older than 21 years of age; and
2. The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under State law or is below the age of compulsory school attendance; and
3. The child is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or the child has a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and
4. The child moved within the preceding 36 months to seek or obtain qualifying work, or to accompany or join the migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher identified in paragraph 3, above, to seek or obtain qualifying work; and
5. Regarding the move identified in paragraph 4, above, the child:
 - a. Has moved from one school district to another; or
 - b. In a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
 - c. Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in or to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian who engages in a fishing activity. (This provision currently applies only to Alaska.)

The general purpose of the MEP is to ensure that children of migrant workers have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool, provided to other children. To achieve this purpose, the MEP helps state and local education agencies remove barriers to the school enrollment, attendance, and achievement of migrant children. Although many migrant families represent language minorities, it is important to remember that many do not.

IMMIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Status as an immigrant often overlaps with EL status among students. However, educators must be aware that not all immigrant students are ELs. Some immigrant students, for example, might come from English-speaking countries or from countries where English is one of several primary languages. Many immigrants also come to the United States already English proficient, even if they come from countries where English is not widely spoken.

For purposes of education, immigrant children and youth include those individuals who:

- Are aged 3 through 21
- Were not born in the U.S., “State” means the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Section 3127 of ESEA). Children born to U.S. citizens abroad (e.g., children born on a military base overseas) may be considered immigrants if they meet all the criteria in the definition of immigrant; and
- Have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than 3 full academic years. A full academic year is 10 months of school attendance, kindergarten through 12th grade. If a student has been in different schools in different school districts and even in different states, the number of months that the student has been in school in any one or more states must not add up to a total of more than 3 full academic years.

RCSD identifies immigrant students by adding a question to the Home Language Survey that is filled out by all new students during enrollment. The form should ask about the number of years the child has attended school in the United States. The HLS strongly recommended by MDE includes a section that addresses immigrants.

There are several different needs that immigrants might have. One of the biggest needs is often English language instruction. RCSD may need to help immigrant students adjust to U.S. culture as well as to the culture of a new school and community. School staff may also need professional development in cultural proficiency to serve immigrant students more effectively.

RESOURCES

Rankin County School District English Learner Website

<https://www.rcsd.ms/departments/federal-programs/title-iii-part-a-english-learners>

Mississippi Department of Education English Learner Website <https://www.mdek12.org/EL>

Mississippi Department of Education Intervention Services Website

<https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/InterventionServices>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2016, November). *English learner toolkit: Chapter 6—Tools and resources for addressing English learners with disabilities*. <https://ncela.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/chap6.pdf>

APPENDIX



HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY FOR K-12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS



STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Name _____ Grade _____
First Middle Last

Date of Birth _____ Gender _____ School _____

1. What is the dominant language **most often** spoken by the student? _____
2. What is the language **routinely** spoken in the home, regardless of the language spoken by the student? _____
3. What language was **first** learned by the student? _____
4. Does the parent/guardian need **interpretation** services? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If so, what language? _____
5. Does the parent/guardian need **translated** materials? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If so, what language? _____
6. What was the date the student first enrolled in a school in the United States? _____
MM/YYYY
7. In what country was the student born? _____

 Parent / Guardian Signature

 Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

DISTRICT USE ONLY

☐ Designated English Learner on the LAS Links Screener

DOCUMENTATION OF LAS LINKS SCREENER FOR STUDENT					
Date	Speaking Score	Listening Score	Reading Score	Writing Score	Composite Score



ENCUESTA DE IDIOMA PARA DISTRITOS ESCOLARES K - 12

INFORMACIÓN DEL ESTUDIANTE

Nombre del estudiante _____ Grado _____
Primero Segundo Apellido

Fecha de Nacimiento _____ Género _____ Escuela _____

1. ¿Cuál es el idioma predominante que más a menudo habla el estudiante? _____

2. ¿Cuál es el idioma hablado habitualmente en el hogar, sin importar el idioma que habla el estudiante? _____

3. ¿Qué idioma aprendió por primera vez el estudiante? _____

4. ¿El padre / tutor necesita servicios de interpretación? _____ Sí _____ No
Si es así, ¿qué idioma? _____

5. ¿El padre / tutor necesita materiales traducidos? _____ Sí _____ No
Si es así, ¿qué idioma? _____

6. ¿Cuál fue la fecha en que el estudiante se inscribió por primera vez en una escuela en los Estados Unidos? _____
MM / AAAA

7. ¿En qué país nació el estudiante? _____

Firma del Padre / Tutor

Fecha (MM / DD / AAAA)

Uso Exclusivo del Distrito

Estudiantes de Inglés en el LAS Links Screener

DOCUMENTACIÓN DE LAS Links Screener PARA ESTUDIANTES

<i>Fecha</i>	<i>Puntuación Hablar</i>	<i>Puntuación Escuchar</i>	<i>Puntuación Lectura</i>	<i>puntuación de Escritura</i>	<i>Puntuacion Compuesta</i>

APPENDIX B | Language Service Plan (for Students with Limited English Proficiency)

This form should be completed by the individual responsible for providing the instructional program for the EL students and the classroom teacher. This form should be updated annually. **Person completing this form** _____

STUDENT NAME		_____		DOB	_____	Age	_____
PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN			_____		LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN IN HOME		
ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE(S)		_____		DATE FIRST ENROLLED IN A U.S. SCHOOL	_____	IMMIGRANT STATUS (< 3 yrs)	_____
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME				_____			
PHONE	(home) _____	(work) _____	(cell) _____				
HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION to parent/guardian is requested in:				☐ English OR ☐ Native Language: _____ ☐ Oral OR ☐ Written			

ACADEMIC HISTORY PRIOR TO ENTERING CURRENT DISTRICT

Age Started School	_____	Years in Preschool/K	_____	Years in grades 1-5	_____	Years in grades 6-12	_____
Last grade completed		☐ Interrupted Formal Education ☐ Limited Schooling ☐ No Formal schooling					
Has the student been referred for Special Education?		☐ Yes ☐ No		Does the child have an IEP?		☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Does the child have an 504 Plan?		☐ Yes ☐ No	

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL HISTORY

SUBJECT	BELOW GRADE LEVEL	ON OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL	METHOD USED TO DETERMINE LEVEL	INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE
<i>Example: Math</i>	<i>X</i>		<i>Course grade from previous year (D)</i>	
Math	_____	_____	_____	_____
Reading	_____	_____	_____	_____
Writing	_____	_____	_____	_____
Social Studies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Science	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST INFORMATION

TEST	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level	Date	Score	Level
ELPT Speaking															
ELPT Listening															
ELPT Reading															
ELPT Writing															
Composite SCORE															

Language Service Plan *(for Students with Limited English Proficiency)*

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APPENDIX B (continued)**Language Service Plan (for Students with Limited English Proficiency)**

All testing accommodations are classroom accommodations, however not all classroom accommodations are state testing accommodations.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

To meet the needs of this child, the following are recommendations for use in regular classroom instruction:

☐ Paraphrasing or repeating directions in English ☐ Personal cueing ☐ Read the test directions (but not the test items) to individual students or in a small group – repeating and/or paraphrasing the directions, if needed ☐ Dictation of answers to test administrator/proctor (scribe) in English only ☐ Reader (oral administration) ☐ Native language word-to-word dictionaries/electronic word-to-word dictionaries (no definitions) ☐ Present questions in same phrasing as learning/review ☐ Reduced and/or modified class & homework assignments ☐ Modified assessments (i.e. oral) ☐ Break tasks/directions into subtasks ☐ Increase wait time ☐ Additional time to complete assignments and tests ☐ ESS (Extended School Services) ☐ Provide questions for classroom discussion in advance ☐ Label items in the room ☐ Previewing of academic content	☐ Provide shortened assignments ☐ Face student when speaking – speak slowly ☐ Print instead of using cursive; type all notes, tests, handouts ☐ Use high interest/low vocabulary text material ☐ Use overhead and provide students with copies of teacher transparencies/notes/lectures ☐ Make instruction visual – use graphic organizers, pictures, maps, graphs, etc. to aid understanding ☐ Highlight/color code tasks, directions, letters home ☐ Pair ELs with an English speaking “peer partner” for assistance ☐ Provide preferential seating or seating with a peer partner ☐ Check for comprehension often ☐ Ask questions that allow the student to answer successfully ☐ Allow the student opportunities to read aloud successfully ☐ Use manipulatives ☐ Use audiobooks ☐ Record material for student listening ☐ Vocabulary matching/fill-in-the-blank exercises w/ words ☐ OTHER:
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PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LANGUAGE SERVICE PLAN

By signing this form, I am indicating that I have read and understood the Language Service Plan information.

PRINCIPAL Signature

PRINTED NAME

PARENT Signature

PRINTED NAME

EL COORDINATOR Signature

PRINTED NAME

PARENT Signature

PRINTED NAME

EL TEACHER Signature

PRINTED NAME

STUDENT Signature

PRINTED NAME

TEACHER Signature

PRINTED NAME

INTERPRETER Signature

PRINTED NAME

TEACHER Signature

PRINTED NAME

DATE

APPENDIX B (continued)**Exit/Monitor Status Documentation**
(for Students meeting qualifications to exit EL Services)

This form should be completed by the individual responsible for exiting and monitoring the individual student.

STUDENT NAME				DATE OF BIRTH			
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME							
PHONE		(home)		(work)		(cell)	
HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION to parent/guardian requested in:				☐ English OR ☐ Native Language: _____ ☐ Oral OR ☐ Written			
PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM							
YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4	

EL EXIT INFORMATION				
EXIT Eligibility Date				
To be eligible for exit from EL status, students must earn a 4 or 5 on the Reading, Writing, and Overall on the LAS Links assessment. Criteria determining exit from EL status (scores from the ELPT):				
Date of test:				
LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING*	WRITING*	OVERALL*

MONITORING											
Start Date				Date of Parent Notification				Expected date for CONCLUSION OF MONITOR STATUS (Minimum of 4 years)			
REPORT CARD AND STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS											
YEAR 1					YEAR 2						
Grade level:		School Name:			Grade level:		School Name:				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
ELA					ELA						
Math					Math						
Science					Science						
Social Studies					Social Studies						
Other					Other						
Other					Other						
State Assessment Results:					State Assessment Results:						
Is student on track to graduate on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No					Is student on track to graduate on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No						

APPENDIX B (continued)
Exit/Monitor Status Documentation
(for Students meeting qualifications to exit EL Services)

MONITORING, continued									
Start Date			Date of Parent Notification			Expected date for CONCLUSION OF MONITOR STATUS	(Minimum of 4 years)		
REPORT CARD AND STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS									
YEAR 3					YEAR 4				
Grade level:		School Name:			Grade level:		School Name:		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ELA					ELA				
Math					Math				
Science					Science				
Social Studies					Social Studies				
Other					Other				
Other					Other				
State Assessment Results:					State Assessment Results:				
Is student on track to graduate on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No					Is student on track to graduate on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No				

If the information on this form indicates that the former EL student is struggling, indicate steps that will be taken to support the student and the results:

- ☐ Student was referred for intervention services (appropriate documentation must be completed)
- ☐ Student was referred for Counseling
- ☐ Student was referred for rescreening for EL services. In order for students to be re-entered in the EL program, they must retake the LAS Links placement test and meet qualifications. **(This should only be done if language is considered the primary cause for academic struggles.)**