

Language Access Plan to Ensure Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families

Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that will govern the implementation of Sauk Centre Public School's 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.

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.

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). 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 allow 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.

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.

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

Sauk Centre Public School Code of Ethics. <https://www.isd743.org/district/policies/policies-and-procedures>

Section 2: The Plan

Overview

Sauk Centre Public School's language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district into compliance with state and federal language access requirements, including how the district will increase its capacity to address language service and resource needs identified in its self-assessment. This plan is also a roadmap that will help staff navigate the process of setting deadlines, priorities, and identifying responsible personnel for policy and procedures development; hire, contract, assess, and ensure quality control of language assistance services; provide notice of services; provide training of staff; and conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Language Access Plan

Description of Services

Licensed staff in school provide language instruction to students identified as multilingual learners. Multilingual Learner (ML) Coordinator works with district bilingual interpreters and district Cultural Liaison for communication between school and home and also communication during the school day and school events such as open houses and conferences.

ML staff, teachers, and interpreters use Parent Square to communicate messages with parents. This program will translate automatically for the parents when a message is sent in English. Parents can choose their desired language to get these messages. Technology staff can also set the language for parents. Parents can use these services to send messages to the school in their home language and it will translate to English for the school staff. The welcome message on the school phone line is in English and Spanish. Directions are given to push eight for the interpreter. These systems ensure that Spanish speaking families have multiple, easy, and clear pathways to language support. The ML Coordinator and administration will oversee school wide communication for the bilingual interpreters and Cultural Liaison as well as communication about the community and community events.

TransACT is used for all formal multilingual documentation ensuring that parents know and understand student multilingual status and growth. Language Line is used for all communication that is not known by the ML staff and district interpreters.

The ML Coordinator and Cultural Liaison inform parents via parent square about community events. The ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison work with community organizations such as the fire department, food shelf, local churches, Elementary Parent Teacher Association, and Sauk Centre Community Foundation to send out information about community events and resources. The ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison also work with other county organizations that help support families. These organizations include Fey Justicia, West Central Education District, the Area Learning Center, and Adult English Language classes.

The Cultural Liaison interprets, translates and communicates with families about community education opportunities, athletic opportunities, preschool registration, and all school activities. The Cultural Liaison translates all documents sent home by the school including report cards, permission slips, classwork for students, teacher newsletters, preschool registration, school calendars, and parent letters.

Implementation

At Sauk Centre Public Schools, the responsibility of overseeing, developing and modifying the language access plan is shared with the Multilingual (ML) Coordinator, the District Assessment Coordinator, District Administration, and Cultural Liaison. The ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison will review the plan annually to ensure that the LAP reflects the current needs of the families and staff in the district. The ML Coordinator and Cultural Liaison will recommend any changes to the superintendent and district administration. The team based approach will help maintain consistency across buildings while staying responsive to the needs of families and students.

ML coordinator, Cultural Liaison, and building principals are responsible for carrying out the plan within their schools. The ML coordinator will ensure that all staff are aware of procedures and all supports.

Sauk Centre also collaborates with area cooperatives such as Sourcewell and Resource Training and Solutions to help stay informed and strengthen and improve cultural responsiveness and multilingual resources. Sauk Centre also participates in the Lake Wobegon Collaborative with 6 other districts. The Lake Wobegon Collaborative holds bi- monthly meetings for students to learn about cultural competencies.

Information about all of the language access is shared with parents during back to school nights, parent teacher conferences and open houses. New families to the district receive language access information at the time of registration.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

Every student that enrolls in our district including all kindergarten students fill out the Minnesota Home Language Survey. The Minnesota Home Language Survey ([MHLS](#)) is given in the parent's home language. The MHLS asks four questions relating to home language. If any of these four questions is checked with "language(s) other than English", the students will be given the WIDA screener to determine if they qualify for multilingual learner services. The family notes the home language on the registration form. This is documented in all of the district's student information systems and the home language is used to identify families' needs for interpreters.

Students that enroll in grades 1-12 are asked to provide more information on their education, home, and cultural background through an intake meeting and questionnaire. The ML Coordinator, Cultural Liaison, and parent(s) fill out the questionnaire. This helps the district to learn more about the educational and cultural background of the family and the students.

Timeline

Enrollment

- Families complete the Minnesota Home Language Survey (MHLS) during registration
- Home language data is entered into the district's student information system
- Parent (s), ML Coordinator, and Cultural Liaison have an intake meeting to complete an educational and cultural questionnaire to determine language access needs.
- A welcome packet is given to the families including Cultural Liaison phone numbers and email address, school calendar in home language, information about the school day in home language.

Throughout the School year

- Cultural Liaison and interpreters translate documents for home and for students at school.
- School communication is translated and parent square is used to communicate information with families.
- ML Coordinator monitors communication.
- Interpreters are provided for parent-teacher conferences, special education meetings, and school and community events.
- Bilingual staff provide support for real-time communication needs.
- Staff receive training on how to request and access translation and interpretation services.
- Reports cards are sent home in the parent(s)/guardian(s) native language

Biannually

- The district reviews the language access needs to help identify any areas of improvement.

Notice of Services

Sauk Centre Schools is committed to ensuring families know what language support is available for them. Parents are given a pamphlet in their home language at the beginning of each school year and/or at the time of initial registration. This flyer has the phone number and extension for interpreters. It also contains information that the parents will need throughout the school year like important dates, health information, and phone numbers and emails.

It is a requirement of Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32, Language Access Plan Required, that a district or charter's plan be included in their Parent Handbook.

Training for Staff

Training is provided annually to staff during the beginning of the school year. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator provides information to staff about how they can access a bilingual staff member for translating materials needed for meetings or parent emails. Bilingual staff members are trained by the ML coordinator in effective practices for working with families and how to conduct meetings. The Cultural Liaison will work with the ML coordinator to determine additional training needs.

Plan Maintenance

Sauk Centre Schools will keep the Language Access Plan current, relevant, and responsive to the needs of our students, their families, and our community. The Multilingual Learner teacher, District Assessment Coordinator, and district administration will review the plan every two years. The team will look at demographic data, family input, and student needs. The team will also follow guidelines from the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Education. The ML Coordinator will draft the revisions to the plan and the team will review and approve the revisions. The school board will also review and approve.

Community Engagement and Partnership

Sauk Centre Public Schools believes in creating and maintaining a strong relationship with families and community partners. This partnership is essential to student success. Sauk Centre Public Schools collaborates with local and regional organizations to ensure all families, including those whose first language is not English have access to resources, support, and opportunities they need to fully participate in all school opportunities.

The Multilingual Learner Coordinator engages in community social media announcements that may directly impact families that first language is not English. This includes the city of Sauk Centre, the Sauk Centre EMS including Police and Fireman, Sauk Centre utilities, Sauk Centre Community Foundation, Sauk Centre Baseball Association, Sauk Centre Elementary Parent Teacher Association, Adult Basic Education, Area Learning Center, West Central Education District, and Community Ed. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator and also the Cultural Liaison will communicate with these local groups to translate the information. The information will then be shared via Parent Square.

The ML Director is also in communication with regional groups such as Fe y Justicia which is a regional non-profit that helps families of immigrants and migrants in the area. The ML Coordinator shares information from them to families via the cultural liaison through parent square. Information shared include local free health clinics and screenings, free dental screenings, and numbers to call for free legal advice and other resources.

Emergency Communication Protocol

Sauk Centre Public School prioritizes the safety of all students, staff, and all families. All emergency events including severe weather, public health or event alert, schedule or school calendar change, and school safety concern will be sent to families in their first language. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator alongside the Cultural Liaison makes sure that these alerts are sent out in the families home language in a variety of ways in Parent Square, School Messenger, paper copies, translated automated phone calls and individual phone calls as needed. The ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison due frequent checks with families to ensure that the school has up to date information including phone numbers, emergency contacts, and addresses.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation Services

Sauk Centre Public Schools recommends that all staff members use the Cultural Liaison and bilingual paraprofessionals for translations. If AI is used, they must send it to the Cultural Liaison to be checked for accurateness.

All AI used to translate documents and flyers will be provided with a call back number for the Cultural Liaison so students and parents can contact someone at the district if there are questions.

Section 3: Procedures

Overview

This section sets forth guidelines and steps for staff to coordinate, gather data, and deliver uniform services to students, families, and community members.

Procedures

Sauk Centre Staff are expected to respond to all phone calls or in-person requests by using Parent Square or personal phone calls. Home Language preference for each student can be found on Power School and on Educlimber. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator also provides this information to teachers, office staff, and administrators at the beginning of the school year. The technology department also sets the home language preference for the families in School Messenger and Parent Square to make sure that families are receiving the information in their first language. These efforts are supported by the Multilingual Learner Coordinator and the district Cultural Liaison. The ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison also coordinate with staff to make sure that appropriate communication is happening with all families in the district.

In person translators will be available for all in person, telephone, and video meetings. Families may also come to school and request that an interpreter is available. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison will be contacted to help coordinate and support the request. Staff will contact the ML Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison with any language access complaints and the ML Coordinator will notify parents via phone call or Parent Square message.

An interpreter will be provided for all preschool screening and IEP testing to ensure the student has equal opportunities with no language barriers. The interpreters and the Cultural Liaison are authorized to provide interpreter services during both of these meetings. Staff set this up and request interpreters by emailing the Multilingual Learner Coordinator and/or the Cultural Liaison. The Multilingual Learner Coordinator and the Cultural Liaison work together to coordinate schedules to and make sure an interpreter is available.

Training is available for the interpreters and Cultural Liaison at the beginning of each school year. As needed training is provided throughout the school year. The interpreters and Cultural Liaisons are monitored throughout the school year and evaluated by the building principals and Multilingual Learner Coordinator at the end of the school year.

Contact Information

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Resources

Fe y Justicia - <https://www.feyjusticiamn.com/>

Refugee and Immigrant Helpline - 1-800-814-4806

Sauk Centre Food Shelf - 320-351-2287

Sauk Centre Interpreter Line - Spanish - 320-352-2258 - Press 8