Language Services Access Plan

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Saint Paul Public Schools

District 625 Language Access Plan

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) serves a diverse student body, with over 115-languages spoken at home. While a wide range of languages are present, the school district provides information, including translations and interpretation services, in the five most common languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Karen. All families have a right to free interpretation, translation and accessibility services for any language or accommodation need.

In SPPS, we are committed to ensuring that every family has equitable access to information. Our Language Access Plan is designed to remove language barriers and empower families who prefer to communicate in a language other than English to engage in their children's education, or who require additional assistance due to a disability.

This plan supports our diverse community by ensuring families can participate in school communications, events and decision-making processes, creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

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Purpose

This plan outlines how the district ensures **equitable access to information, services and communication** for families, students and community members with **limited English proficiency (LEP)** or require additional assistance due to a disability.

Legal Foundation

This plan is in compliance with:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, which establishes the federal requirement under 34 CFR § 300.322(e) that schools ensure parents understand IEP Team meetings, and mandates communication in the parent's native language.
- **Executive Order 13166:** Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency
- **State/local education code and guidance on language access:** This Language Access Plan is intended to align with Minn. Stat. § 123B.32, which requires school districts to provide/utilize processes and procedures that effectively assist students and adults who communicate in a language other than English or require additional assistance due to a disability. The Language Access Plan provides information about the tools, processes and resources available for students, families and staff in District 625.
- **Saint Paul Public Schools Board Policy Parent/Guardian Conferences:** Communication 611.00
- All data collected for the purpose of identifying language needs, including Home Language Surveys, shall be classified and handled as private educational data in accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (Minn. Stat. § 13.32) and FERPA.

Goals

- Ensure **meaningful access** to all district programs and services regardless of English proficiency and disability.
- Support **effective communication** between school staff and families.
  Provide **interpreting and translation services** that are timely, accurate and culturally appropriate.
- Ensure **quality and reliability** in language assistance to avoid educational inequities.

Key Language Services Provided

Interpretation (Oral Language Support)

SPPS provides oral interpretation for families when needed. Depending on the need, the following services are available:

- **In person:** On-Call Interpreter (OCI) database and trained bilingual staff
- **Phone Interpretation:** Language Line
- **Video:** Language Line and On-Call Interpreters (OCI)
- **For low-incidence languages,** SPPS contracts with local agencies upon request.

When to use On-Call Interpreters	When to use Language Line
Requires prior scheduling • In-person meetings • Help build relationships with families • Planned events • Parent-teacher conferences	*Audio/Video* • Emergency situations • High-need languages • Short, in-person meetings • Phone calls to parents if bilingual staff is not available • Unexpected situations • When On-Call Interpreters are not available

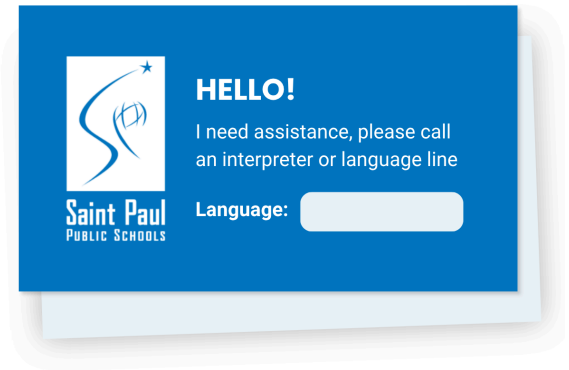
On-Call Interpreter (OCI) request process

Staff requests interpreters through the On-Call Interpreter List

- 24- to 48-hour advance notice preferred
- If the language needed is not listed, that means there are currently no OCIs employed by SPPS who speak that language. For requests regarding interpreters for other languages not included, staff should email Sara Reyes or fill out the OCI Request Form.
- For American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, contact Heather Holter at heather.holter@spps.org

Families can request an interpreter directly with school staff.

- **Language Access Cards:** SPPS provides small cards for families to request interpreting services. Schools can request cards through the family liaison at the school in multiple languages.
- **"We can help you" posters:** Signs informing individuals about their right to request interpreter or translation services. Posters include the 10 top languages in SPPS to help families identify the support needed. Posters at each school's front desk also allow individuals to indicate their language, enabling staff to arrange appropriate language services. Schools should post them in the office/front desk.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- Students, siblings, friends or untrained staff are not allowed to serve as interpreters. Using unqualified individuals to facilitate communication between schools and parents/guardians can result in confusion or miscommunication.
- Schools will inform families that language support is available during parent teacher conferences upon request.
- On-Call Interpreters (OCIs) are approved for oral interpretation only and cannot perform any written translation.

Translation (Written Language Support)

SPPS provides districtwide translations for families in Hmong, Somali, Spanish and Karen. Other languages can be accommodated upon request. Critical documents are translated into the **top languages spoken in the district,** which are, in order of incidence:

- Hmong, Spanish, Karen, Somali

Common translations include:

- Enrollment materials
- Standardized testing and assessments notifications
- Special education documents
- Incident/emergency communication
- Back to school information
- School announcements
- District announcements
- Promotional materials

SPPS provides translations for website information via Weglot for the district's main four languages. Families can view district and school websites in English, Hmong, Karen, Somali and Spanish. Viewers can select one of these language options from the drop-down menu in the header of any webpage.

SPPS uses Finalsite Messages XR and Smore to share important messages with families via automated phone calls, emails, and text messages in the district's five primary languages. These platforms provide automatic translation functionality; staff are instructed to use them in conjunction with, not in place of, trained translators and interpreters.

Accommodations for Parents and Guardians with Disabilities

SPPS ensures that parents, guardians, and adult family members with disabilities can meaningfully participate in all school processes, which may include but is not limited to, IEP meetings, 504 hearings and academic conferences. The district will provide necessary reasonable accomodations—which may include American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, tactile/DeafBlind interpretation and relay services—free of charge upon request.

Identifying Language Needs

- Student demographic information is collected annually in Infinite Campus, the student information system used in SPPS to collect and manage information including enrollment, demographics, address, attendance, assessment, grades and disciplinary records. Families' language preference is recorded during **enrollment/registration** and is updated annually.
- To stay in compliance with state and federal law, all students must have a completed home language survey on file. This form is completed during the enrollment process.
- Infinite Campus tracks the preferred language of communication for families.

Staff Roles And Responsibilities

School Staff Responsibilities

- **Front office staff** must know how to access interpreters, Language Line and translation services.
- **Teachers and administrators** should request services when planning meetings or sending home critical information.
- **Bilingual educational assistants/liaisons** serve as key contacts in schools with high-need populations.

District Staff Responsibilities

Translation Services

The translations team in the Office of Communications provides districtwide translations for families in Hmong, Somali, Spanish and Karen and other languages upon request, and monitors the Hmong, Karen, Somali and Spanish district phone lines. They also offer expertise in multilingual communication strategies to ensure effective, inclusive, and culturally responsive engagement with diverse communities.

Special Education Translation and Interpreter Services

The Office of Specialized Services (OSS) hires and maintains a team of Special Education Interpreters for the high-incidence languages (Hmong, Somali, Spanish, and Karen). This team of interpreters provides written translation of the Prior Written Notice and verbal interpretation of all due process activities across the district for those families who need translation and interpreter services. For other languages, OSS uses interpreters from the On-Call Interpreter List and other local contracting agencies.

Districtwide Cultural Specialists

The Office of Family Engagement & Community Partnerships has four Districtwide Cultural Specialists. They serve as essential bridges between Hmong, Karen, Somali and Spanish-speaking families and school staff. They work closely with the Parent Advisory Councils and partner with schools to support the needs of multilingual families, fostering strong relationships and equitable access to education across the district.

Additionally, cultural specialists play a key role in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all families feel supported and connected. They promote cultural understanding by educating school staff about the cultural backgrounds and unique experiences of multilingual families, contributing to a more inclusive and culturally responsive school community.

Family Engagement Language Services for Families

Family Engagement Language Services for families give schools, programs and departments access to the On-Call Interpreters database and Language Line to remove barriers for families to be able to participate in their students' education.

Language Line is a service contracted by SPPS that enables school staff to communicate with parents via phone or video when in-person language support is not available. All departments and schools have access to Language Line. The Office of Family Engagement ensures that all schools have the training and information they need to access these services.

On-Call Interpreters are professionals available to support parent-teacher conferences, school events, meetings and more. School staff can access a database of trained and approved interpreters to meet a variety of communication needs.

Interpreter and Translator Qualifications

All interpreters and translators must meet district standards for language proficiency and professional conduct. If the interpreter doesn't have previous certification or training, the district will provide professional development in the following key areas:

- **Confidentiality –** Ensuring all information is kept private and secure
- **Accuracy –** Providing precise and faithful interpretation and translation
- **Neutrality –** Remaining impartial in all interactions
- **Educational Terminology –** Understanding and correctly using terms commonly used in school settings

Notice of Language Services

The district informs families of their right to free interpretation and translation services through multiple communication channels, including:

- School websites
- Enrollment packets
- Front office signage
- Annual notifications
- Language access cards
- School newsletters
- Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

Emergency and Urgent Situations

- Interpreters and Language Line are used for **same-day or emergency interpretation needs** (e.g., illness, disciplinary actions). An **interpreter** is a **trained professional** who **facilitates communication between people who speak different languages,** usually in real-time.
    - ***MDE DEFINITION:*** *An interpreter is a person who listens to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converts it to another language (target language). The Interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting*

information, summarizing or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

- When an interpreter is not available, bilingual staff can be used to **communicate** with families in emergency situations. **To communicate** means to **send or share information**—either by speaking, writing, gesturing, or using other methods.
- If the situation requires a written communication, translations will be provided based on school population.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) regularly reviews and evaluates the Language Access Plan to ensure it effectively meets the needs of our diverse community. The plan is formally reviewed and updated by the SPPS Board of Education every two years.

SPPS values community input and is committed to providing high-quality language access services. Any person who believes they have been denied meaningful access to district programs or services because their language or disability accommodations under this Access Plan were not effectively met may file a formal appeal. To provide feedback or file a complaint, please contact:

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