

Engaging Multilingual Families

Family Engagement Principles

Family engagement efforts are tailored to address all families, so all learners are successful.



Summary

Multilingual families speak a language other than English. Children from these families may be identified as English Learners if the child's primary language or the primary language of the home is not English. Once a non-English language is identified, learners are given a screener to identify any additional support that may be needed. If additional support is needed, the student is considered an English Learner. If the student demonstrates proficiency in academic English, the student is a bilingual or multilingual student and additional supports are not provided for language development. In some cases, the student might not be classified as an English Learner, but the parents may still require communication in a language other than English.

Civil Rights Require ([EL Toolkit Chapter 10](#)):

- SEAs and LEAs have an obligation to communicate meaningfully with limited English proficient (LEP) parents and to notify LEP parents adequately of information about any program, service, or activity called to the attention of non-LEP parents.
- LEAs must have a process to identify LEP parents and provide them with free and effective language assistance, such as translated materials or an appropriate and competent interpreter.
- Appropriate and competent translators or interpreters should have proficiency in target languages; ease of written and oral expression; knowledge of specialized terms or concepts; as well as be trained on their role, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need for confidentiality.

Considerations

- What can you do to learn more about the family's culture? Gender roles? Cultural beliefs/customs? Significant dates? Food?
- Are staff and families comfortable with using translators?
- Can the program or school provide transportation or childcare for families?
- Can the event/activity be moved to a place other than school where families feel comfortable?
- Do the parents/family and the school have a mutual understanding of the definition of family engagement?

Suggestions

- Get to know families through home visits (make sure to have interpreter services).
- Work with families to identify possible barriers and create solutions.
- Create meaningful relationships with multilingual families based on trust and respect.
- Maintain open two-way communication.
- Converse with families regarding the role English plays in their home. Is maintaining their native language important?
- Incorporate or acknowledge important cultural milestones at school.
- Provide a point of contact at the school for parents to call with questions. (Ensure that they know how to get interpretation if they need it.)

Resources

[Engaging English Learner Communities and Families Through Distance Learning](#)

[Overcoming Barriers to ELL Family Engagement](#)

[Partnering with Families](#)

[Tips for using interpreters \(not a promotion for Telelanguage\)](#)

[Communication Apps](#)

[WIDA Family Engagement Website](#)

[Getting to know ELL Students](#)

[ABC's of Family Engagement](#)

[Focus Bulletins](#)

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Kent City Public Schools, [Barb Berry](#)

[Refugee Community Engagement](#)