

Yours, Mine, Ours: English Language Learners (ELLs) in New York State



As parents, educators and community members, we partner to ensure that our young people are successful in school.



Introduction

NYSUT is very pleased to have partnered with the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (NYS PTA) in developing this guide for parents of English language learners (ELL). This partnership between our two organizations reflects the positive relationship that should exist between home and school. We can say from experience, that when it comes to helping students do well in school, parents' support makes a big difference.

Teachers know that it takes all of us — parents and educators — working together to help students do well. We cannot, and should not, do it alone. You know your children best. And no one is better prepared to help us help them, than you are. It is only when parents, who understand their child, and teachers, who have knowledge of classroom instruction, work together, that children will reach their fullest potential.

When parents and educators work together, the best interests of the child are met. We hope that this guidebook will provide you with the information you need to help your child succeed in school. Know your rights as a parent so you can be a strong advocate for your child's future.



Bonnie M. Russell

Bonnie Russell, President
New York State Congress
of Parents and Teachers, Inc.



Karen E. Magee

Karen E. Magee,
President, NYSUT

What help is available in school if my child speaks little or no English?

- When you register your child in school, you will be asked questions about your home language.
- If your child or family speaks a language other than English in your home, a teacher from the school will interview your child.
- If your answers and the interview show that your child might need help in English, then the school will administer the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) to your child.
- This test will help the school district decide if your child needs to receive additional help learning English. This help may include instruction in English as a New Language (ENL) and may also include instruction in a bilingual education program.
- The school will inform you within 10 days (after your child takes the NYSITELL) if your child will need additional help in learning English and if the school district provides a bilingual education program in your child's home language. The school district will give you information about the goals and purposes of the ENL and/or bilingual programs and will have a meeting with parents about these programs.
- The school district will provide information in English and in your home language about your child's English language needs and educational program, as well as notices about meetings in both languages.
- You will have 10 school days to sign and return the program placement form that is required from parents or guardians.

What are ENL instructional services?

English as a New Language instruction is a program to help your child succeed in school. ENL teachers help children develop English language skills, cultural awareness and academics in English. ENL instruction must be provided by a teacher with New York state certification in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for grades K-12 or certification in Bilingual Education (BE) for grades K-6.

Depending on your child's English proficiency, ENL instruction will include a range of settings. Your child may:

- attend class with other students who are also ELLs.

- receive small group instruction, called “stand-alone ENL.”
- receive ENL instruction along with subject areas that include English language arts, math, science and/or social studies.

If my child is eligible for services, how much ENL instruction will my child receive?

- For kindergarten through grade 8, students who score at the beginning levels of English (Entering or Emerging on the NYSITELL) receive at least 360 minutes per week of ENL instruction. For grades 9–12, students scoring at the Entering level receive at least 540 minutes per week of ENL instruction, and students at the Emerging level receive at least 360 minutes per week of ENL. For beginning English students, part of the required ENL instruction is integrated with ELA instruction at your child’s grade level. For students at higher levels of English, ENL instruction may also be integrated with other subjects (math, science, or social studies).
- For kindergarten through grade 12, students with intermediate to advanced levels of English (Transitioning or Expanding on the NYSITELL) receive at least 180 minutes per week of ENL instruction. Part of the required ENL instructional time for Transitioning students must be integrated with English Language Arts (ELA) at your child’s grade level. Students at the Expanding level must receive all 180 minutes of required ENL instruction integrated with a subject area (ELA, math, science, or social studies).

As a parent, may I refuse ENL services for my child?

Students who need help in English are required to receive ENL instruction. **ENL services are not optional.** However, if a bilingual program is available in your school district, you may decide to have your child attend the bilingual program. English instruction is included in the bilingual program. Bilingual programs have classes in both your child’s languages.

What bilingual services could my child receive?

In a bilingual instructional program, English language learners receive:

- Subject area (math, science, and/or social studies) instruction in the student's home language,
- Language arts instruction in the student's home language, and
- Specialized instruction to help your child learn English. Students must receive ENL instruction according to their level of English proficiency.

When are schools required to provide bilingual services?

School districts in New York state must provide a bilingual instructional program when:

- 20 or more students who speak the same language, and who are in the same grade, are **in the school district**.
- The school district must continue to offer the bilingual program to all students who are English language learners, if there were at least 15 students in their bilingual class during the previous year. However, for languages other than Spanish or Mandarin, a district may apply for a 1-year delay in starting a bilingual program.

In New York City, the *Aspira Consent Decree* requires a bilingual education program when:

- **In Grades K–8:** 15 or more students who speak the same language, and who are in two adjacent grades, for example, in grades 1 and 2.
- **In Grades 9–12:** 20 or more students who speak same language, and who are in the same grade level.

What testing accommodations will my child receive as an English language learner?

Your child may receive the following special services during state tests in the subject areas (math, science, social studies):

- Your child may use a bilingual dictionary or glossary, such as: www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/bilingual_glossaries.htm
- Your child may have extra time for taking the tests.

- Your child may take the test in a separate location in a small group or alone.
- Your child may have a subject test that is translated into his/her home language, when it is available. Both home language editions **AND** the English editions of the tests should be provided to your child.
- Your child may hear spoken or oral translations of the subject tests, when there is translation in writing available in his/her home language.
- Your child may write his or her responses in the home language.
- Your child may hear the listening part **3 times** during the NYS English Language Arts test and the NYS Regents Comprehensive Examination in English.
- During their first year in the ENL program, students do not take the NYS English Language Arts test. Instead, your child will take the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment (NYSESLAT).



What other instructional support services are available for my child?

- Your child may also receive academic support services, guidance and counseling, in his/her home language, whenever possible.



- Your child may receive special education services, Title I services, vocational education (job preparation), advanced and gifted classes, when available, in addition to ENL and/or home language instruction. If you believe that your child may have difficulty learning in his/her home language and in English, please talk about this with your child's teachers. Teachers may also talk with you about any learning issues that they are concerned about your child.
- Your child must have equal access to the same non-academic programs and extracurricular activities available to all other students, including summer school, after-school programs and tutoring.

How will I be informed of my child's school performance?

- Most schools send home progress reports during the school year. Some school districts may post these reports online. Talk with your child's teacher. Schools must send reports and notices to you in your home language, if this is the best language for you to understand. Each year, parents may need to remind school administrators, or their child's teacher, if they prefer to receive notices and progress reports in their home language.
- Parents may also request to have the information (written in English) explained to them in their home language.
- Teachers at your child's school must meet with you at least twice a year, to help you understand the goals of your child's

educational program and his or her progress. The school may have special days for you to meet with your child's teachers.

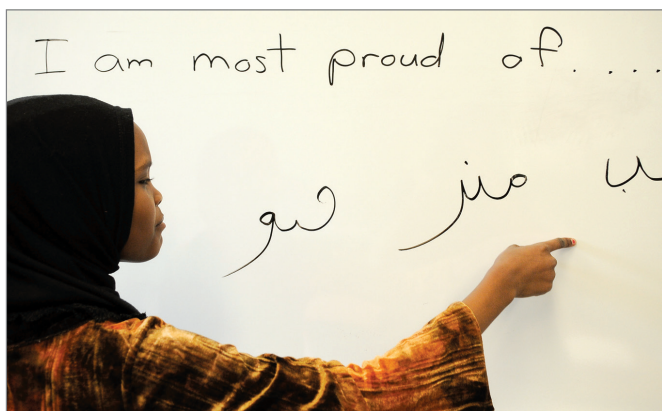
- If your child is enrolled in an ENL and/or bilingual program, your child is required to take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) each year to determine progress in English. Each year that your child takes the NYSESLAT, you will receive the results of your child's test. You can request to have the results explained to you in your home language. If your child scores Commanding (English proficient) on the NYSESLAT, your child will leave the ENL instructional program.

What services are available when my child is no longer eligible for ENL services?

For two years after your child has reached a proficient level of English, your child will receive at least 90 minutes per week of ENL services, including:

- Monitoring your child's academic progress in all classes and subject areas,
- ENL instruction,
- Subject area support,
- Reading/Academic Intervention Services (AIS) or extra help that **all students** can get, and
- Counseling services that **all students** can get.

In addition, students who are no longer eligible for an ENL or bilingual program, are entitled to receive test accommodations for two years after they have tested Commanding (proficient) on the NYSESLAT.



Concerns and Resources:

- It is important that you **continue to communicate with your child in your home language**. Providing a strong foundation in your child's home language will help your child learn English and be successful in school, because children can connect what they already know in their first language with the new information that they learn at school. Students with a strong first language actually have greater success in learning English. Communicating and reading in another language at home will also help your child learn English better in the long run, as well as help you maintain your culture and close family relationships.
- Ask your child's teacher(s) and other school personnel, such as school counselors, to learn about other educational and cultural resources that are available to families in your community.
- There are also resources available on the Internet, including:
 - New York State Education Department, Office of Bilingual Education & World Languages (OBE-WL):
www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/
 - Regional Bilingual Education – Resource Network (RBE-RN):
www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/betac.html
 - Colorín Colorado: *<http://www.colorincolorado.org/families>*
 - American Federation of Teachers (AFT):
www.aft.org/education/publications/resources-parents
 - National Education Association (NEA):
www.nea.org/parents/
 - New York State United Teachers (NYSUT):
www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/2015/april/fact-sheet-15-07-nys-requirements-for-bilingual-education-and-english-as-a-new-language-programs
 - New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (NYS PTA): *www.nyspta.org/Resources/Resources_ParentResourcesGuidesFactSheets.cfm*
 - National PTA and Univision Contigo's Clave al Exito - 5 Pasos Hacia el Exito: *<http://noticias.univision.com/articulo/2118468/2014-10-07/educacion/semana-de-la-educacion/los-cinco-pasos-hacia-el-exito-escolar>*
- If you have questions or concerns about your child's ENL or bilingual program, you should first contact your child's teachers, program director and school principal.

- If you still have questions or concerns about your child's ENL or bilingual services, you may contact the NYU Language RBERN at 212-992-6730. They will be able to confirm when the new hotline will be in operation by email at nysparenthotline@nyu.edu and by phone at 800-469-8224. They can help anyone who lives in New York state.
- If you think your child was misidentified and does not need ENL instruction, you may make a request in writing to the school district to review your child's English language skills. Your child's teachers may also make this request. Following the review, a change in ENL status can be made, with approval from the school superintendent and the student's parent or guardian, or students themselves if they are 18 years old.



For further information, contact:

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