

English Language Learner Students & Families

Common Vocabulary

CHARACTERIZING THE POPULATION

ELL – “English Language Learner”: refers to a national-origin-minority student who is in the process of acquiring English language skills; also referred to as “EL” or English Learners; *the preferred term over all others at school as it highlights accomplishments rather than deficits*

LEP – “Limited English Proficient”: a person whose primary language is other than English and who have limited English proficiency in one of the four domains of language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading, writing). Commonly used to describe non-English speaking parents and families of students.

Other synonyms?

- Language Minority Students
- Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Students
- English as a Second Language (“ESL”) Students – less preferred term to ELL



LEGAL STATUS

Unaccompanied Minor or Unaccompanied Children: children under 18 who immigrate and arrive to the U.S. without their parents; many arrive looking for family already present in the U.S. Many are released and supervised by the US Dept. of Health & Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement.

- The current waves of children are primarily from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and they are primarily fleeing violence in their home countries.
- From October 2013-June 2016, 2,898 unaccompanied children have been released to sponsors in Louisiana, of which 1,127 are in Jefferson, 533 in Orleans, 449 in East Baton Rouge, 70 in Lafayette, and 69 in St. Tammany Parishes.

Undocumented: preferred term to describe foreign nationals who are residing in the U.S. without legal status.

Inappropriate, Pejorative Terminology (suggests lack of cultural competency)

- “Illegal” and/or Aliens”
- “Anchor Babies”
- “Parachute Kids”

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Bilingual Instruction: Bilingual programs maintain and develop skills in the primary language while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English. The purpose of a bilingual program is to facilitate the ELs transition to an all-English instructional program while the students receive academic subject instruction in the primary language to the extent necessary. Models include Bilingual Immersion, Integrated Transitional Bilingual Education, and Dual Language Immersion.

ELDA – “English Language Development Assessment”: current assessment required by Louisiana for measuring EL students’ language acquisition across four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; scores language proficiency at 5 levels (1-5).

ESL/ESOL/ELD: “English as a Second Language”/“English for Speakers of Other Languages”/“English Language Development”: model to provide techniques, methodology, and special curriculum designed to teach English language learners explicitly about the English language, including the academic vocabulary in English needed to access content instruction and to develop their English language proficiency in all four domains – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students receive instruction from qualified EL teachers for either the entire school day, or some part of it; may consist of pullout or push-in formats.

English Immersion strategy programs: English is the primary language of instruction and is tailored to the developmental linguistic needs of ELL students; teachers don’t necessarily have background in the native language.

Newcomer Program: separate, relatively self-contained programs typically for newly arrived middle and high school students, who also have limited or interrupted schooling in their home countries. Goals are acquisition of beginning English language skills, core academic skills, and acculturation into US school system.

Sheltered Instruction: a teaching strategy using physical activities, visual aids, and the environment to teach English language vocabulary.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP): explicit, branded model of sheltered instruction where language and context for academic subject matter are adapted for ELL students.

Structured Immersion: programmatic technique where English is the primary mode of instruction, promoting acquisition of English language skills to help ELL students succeed in English-only mainstream classroom. Teachers have specialized training in meeting the needs of ELL students, possessing either a bilingual education or ESL teaching credential and/or training, and strong receptive skills in the students’ primary language.

ACADEMIC TERMS

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS): basic, everyday speech that can be supported contextually by gestures; “playground English.” Can be acquired in about 3-5 years.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP): level of language proficiency required to understand academically challenging material in a classroom setting; can take 5-8 years to acquire.

BICS-CALP Gap: discrepancy between ELL students’ conversational and academic English.

English Language Proficiency Standards: principles or criteria for identifying and describing English-language oral, reading, writing, and listening skills that are necessary for ELLs to be able to communicate effectively and participate fully in school.

Full English Proficiency: refers to students who have demonstrated full or fluent proficiency in English, who are able to speak, read, write, and understand English at all levels on par with grade-level classmates, and consequently do not need any additional language accommodations in the mainstream classroom.

Long-term English Learner: A student who has not attained English proficiency within five years of identification as an English learner. This term is legally significant under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

SIFE – “Students with Interrupted Formal Education”: ELL students who entered a US school after second grade; have had at least two years less schooling than their peers; function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and math; and may be pre-literate in their first language.

APPLICABLE LAWS

Equal Educational Opportunity Act (“EEOA”): A federal law, the EEOA requires the state Department of Education and school districts to take “appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by [their] students in [their] instructional programs.” Several major federal cases have interpreted the meaning of “appropriate action” for school districts – see

Castañeda v. Pickard, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974 Supreme Court case) that predates and motivated the creation of the EEOA.

Title III of “Every Student Succeeds Act”: Also known as the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, under Title III, the U.S. Department of Education awards grants to state Departments of Education, which, in turn, award Federal funds through subgrants to school districts in order to improve the education of EL students so that they learn English and meet challenging State academic content and achievement standards. Through accepting Title III and also Title I funds, there come legal requirements to provide language access to LEP families to the extent practicable.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: Title VI prohibits recipients of Federal financial assistance, including the state Department of Education and school districts, from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Title VI’s prohibition on national origin discrimination requires the state Department of Education and school districts to take “affirmative steps” to address language barriers so that ELL students and their families may participate meaningfully in schools’ educational programs. It also requires school districts to respond to peer-to-peer bullying that is based on students’ race, color, or national origin.

References:

Sarah Bardack, American Institutes for Research (AIR), “Common ELL Terms and Definitions,” April 2010
U.S. Department of Education – Office for Civil Rights, “Developing Programs for English Language Learners: Glossary,” 2015, available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/glossary.html>