

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 ISD 857'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

ISD 857 will utilize the Minnesota Department of Education’s (MDE) Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language available at [English Learner Disability Resources](#) webpage. This guide is only available in English because it was intended for language access practitioners.

Section 2: The Plan

Overview

ISD 857’s language access plan provides a blueprint for bringing the district or charter 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

ISD 857 offers written translation, in person interpretation, TransAct, and audio translation using electronics.

Elementary – Elementary parents in need of interpreter services are contacted by elementary staff to set a time for conferences. At this set time a translator will be utilized for communications.

High School - Parents are encouraged to call or email ahead if they will need interpreter services. Interpreter services are available at conferences on a first come first serve basis.

Elementary = 504-522-3210 hmathew@lewalt.k12.mn.us

High School = 507-523-2191 Option 2, springle@lewalt.k12.mn.us

Implementation

The ISD 857 superintendent will be responsible for oversight of the Language Access Plan. Administration, administrative assistants, interpreters, EL staff and teachers will report to the superintendent.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

ISD 857 will utilize its school enrollment form with the Minnesota Language survey to determine access needs. Additionally, we encourage parents to reach out regarding any other specific interpretation needs. Students on IEP's and/or in the EL program will have additional information gathered by the corresponding program staff.

Spanish – Written and Verbal Translation (Onsite staff, purchased services, and Project FINE)

Cebuano – Written Translation (Family support as we have not been able to access any MN resources for this language)

Braille – Typed translation (HVED Support)

Timeline

August: Board Approval

September – May: Implementation and Review

June – August: Revision

Funding and Procurement

During budgeting, monies are allocated for interpreter services for conferences as needed based upon current student population. Additional funds are added during budget revisions if needed due to change in enrollment needs of students and families.

Interpreters are arranged for conferences once the dates of conferences for the upcoming years are set. At the time of IEP or additional meetings, services are requested on an as needed basis.

Notice of Services

- Plan is available in the parent and student handbook for elementary and high school.
- Parents are reminded of interpreter services prior to conference night. Parents are encouraged to set a time, so that they do not have to wait for interpreter availability.
- IEP meeting needs are identified at the time of scheduling and parents are asked about interpreter needs.

Training for Staff

ISD 857 has created a training document for all interpreters. All interpreters will be asked to sign a training acknowledgement yearly.

Plan Maintenance

The plan will be reviewed yearly as noted above. Plans will be updated and approved as part of the parent/student handbooks by the school board yearly.

Community Engagement and Partnership

The district will continue partnerships with Hiawatha Valley Education District and Project FINE in order to meet school community needs.

Emergency Communication Protocol

When district emergency messages are communicated messages are sent in Spanish and English.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation Services

Online translation services are used and when available, persons in the district that are literate in Spanish are asked to peruse documents when time is available in non-emergency communications.

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

- The school district will work with Hiawatha Valley Education District with language assistance needs, including the needs of those who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.
- Language preference for EL are documented in a spreadsheet yearly to determine communication preferences. JMC is used to document language preferences related to home and school communications as well.
- Staff will utilize technology or on-site staff, when available, to provide information to parents regarding language assistance services.
- Language needs are identified at the time of enrollment and documented in JMC.
- Staff will respond in preferred format whenever possible.
- Staff will reach out to internal contacts when language assistance is needed. If additional services are needed, staff will reach out to community and state organizations.
- The school district will work with Hiawatha Valley Education District to access telephone and video interpretation services.
- The district requests that parents having concerns regarding interpretation/translation of communications reach out to the school office or office of the superintendent to note concerns.
- Language access complaints can be addressed to the Superintendent via email or phone.
- [Describe what specific educational programs and services (i.e. English Learner programs and Individual Education Plan) should the use of a professional interpreter be required or strongly encouraged.]

- Bilingual staff may be asked to support in the circumstance of emergency communications, drop in visits, and or pre-scheduled meetings where other interpreters are unavailable. Bilingual staff will not serve in both translation and teacher capacities other than if they conduct their own conferences in a language other than English.
- District bilingual staff will be asked to complete the yearly training similar to other interpreters and sign a state of completion.

Contact Information

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