

PROMISES FULFILLED

A LEADER'S GUIDE FOR
SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNERS

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INTRODUCTION

Just Who Are My English Learners, and How Do I Serve Them?

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Academic definition: Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or LEP. These individuals may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter (Limited English Proficiency, n.d.).

Friendly definition: Any non-native English learner (EL) who is learning English as an additional language. *English learner* is now the preferred notation.

If your school does not yet have a student identified as limited English proficient or an English learner, it soon will. Are you ready?

ELs will invariably come to your school with a variety of abilities, proficiency levels, content competencies, cultural and educational backgrounds, and instructional and social and emotional needs. They will need instruction in how to read, write, and comprehend English. ELs, with minor exceptions, are already literate or semiliterate in a language. In fact, many are highly literate in several languages. Many are equally educated in the core content of mathematics,

science, social studies, and language arts as their native English-speaking peers.

We crafted this book specifically to help administrators and teacher leaders coach and support teachers in preK–12 classrooms to help and support English learners. Within the next few pages, we help you get to know who your ELs are and discuss the best ways for you to identify and serve them.

The goals for this book are to help readers identify, classify, and serve their ELs while complying with federal laws and guidelines. In addition, it will help schools and districts educate their staff in how to integrate evidence-based instructional strategies that apply to ELs and their non-EL classmates. Having experienced success with schools that implement these instructional strategies school-wide, in this book we recommend a whole-school approach, offer steps to implement it, and highlight the benefits all your students and teaching staff will derive.

Types of English Learners

The overall category—and the U.S. government’s former way of identifying EL students—is *limited English proficient*. Throughout this book, we refer to LEP students as English learners or ELs. You may also hear those in the profession call them English language learners (ELLs) or English as a second language (ESL) students. To tweak a William Shakespeare quote, an English learner by any other name is still a student who needs explicit instruction in learning and using English as an additional language.

English Learners From the United States

It is interesting to note that Title III includes Native American and Alaska Native children in the LEP category. Others are surprised perhaps to learn that a solid majority of ELs are natural-born citizens of the United States.

Educators identify ELs in many subcategories: newcomers, long-term ELs (LT-ELs), highly schooled newcomers (HSNs), migrant ELs (M-ELs), students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) or

students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), refugees, immigrant students, ethnic minorities, forever ELs, ELs with special education services (SE-ELs), and, at times, language minority students (LMs). That's a lot of subcategories and acronyms! The good news is that you don't need to commit each and every one of them to memory, but rather keep in mind that these categories exist when assessing students, and reference them as needed. Because each student is an individual, students may have characteristics of several of these subgroups and, as such, need accurate identification so that they receive the services that best suit their unique needs.

In appendix B (page 127), we include a miniglossary that can help you make sense of the alphabet soup that is the LEP world. We suggest you locate it now and perhaps bookmark it for quick reference. It does not list all of the terms districts use to identify ELs, but it does cover the most common categories. Throughout the rest of this guide, we add to the definitions related to services, assessment, data, strategies, and compliance.

English Learners in Your Classrooms

ELs are entitled to additional services by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2016), formerly known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title III—Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students. These services exist specifically for the purpose of learning English in an academic setting, thus enabling students to become productive participants in their schools and communities. The first step along this process is to accurately identify an EL student. Once identified, your next *big step* is to enlist everyone in implementing a whole-school approach to ensure success for ELs as well as all other students.

When implementing the whole-school approach, we suggest that all members of the staff work as a whole to educate the ELs. This includes supporting and coaching instructional support staff, supplemental educational staff, facilitators, coaches, and administration in research-based strategies. By adopting the attitude that all members of the staff have a part in educating and ensuring success for all learners, schools succeed. When we train all members in the

same strategies, and administration can inspect against expectation and coach, as well as evaluate that target strategies and instructional goals are being implemented, schools succeed. When all processes, strategies, goals, and expectations are unified throughout a school, schools succeed.

How Do I Start Identifying My ELs?

Identifying ELs when they enter your school or district is imperative. The Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) recommend that every district has a process to identify entering LEP students—typically in the form of a home language survey (USDOJ, 2015b). Many schools and districts have a family welcome center or the equivalent through which all students wishing to enroll in the school district register. If your system has such a process, great! You are halfway there. If your school lacks a sufficient process for EL identification, using a home language survey to identify those students whose native language is not English is a good place to start. A home language survey asks four simple questions.

1. What language do you speak with your child at home?
2. What language does your child speak at home with you?
3. What language does your child speak with his or her friends?
4. What language did your child speak when learning how to talk?

If a parent answers any language other than English for any of the four questions, the student should be screened for his or her English language development (ELD) level.

If you'd like to see specific examples of a home language survey in practice, a quick Internet search will provide you with several good examples. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Washington provides an excellent example as well as an explanation of how it helps students (<http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/pubdocs/HLS/HLSEnglish.pdf>).

To see how you can best integrate a home language survey into a standard registration process, look at the example of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, in Charlotte, North Carolina ([http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/StudentPlacement/Documents/2013-14%20Enrollment%20Packet%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/StudentPlacement/Documents/2013-14%20Enrollment%20Packet%20(English).pdf)). This district's International Center also provides a good example of inclusive EL services including but not limited to just the registration and screening process (www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/ci/els/ic/Pages/default.aspx). The Family Registration and Orientation Center, in Spokane Public Schools, Spokane, Washington and the International Welcome Center of Albemarle County Public Schools, in Charlottesville, Virginia are also good examples (www.spokaneschools.org/Page/1505 or www2.k12albemarle.org/dept/instruction/esol/Pages/default.aspx).

Many times, instead of enrolling through an International Center, EL students enroll directly at the school they will attend, where it's possible for their EL status to go unidentified. This puts the burden of responsibility for identifying these students directly on the school.

Regardless of the location for registration, a very specific process must occur. Those who are responsible for the intake process must receive training to recognize students who may need ESL services. If a school system identifies a student as knowing, speaking, using, or hearing a language other than English in the home, or with family and friends, it must screen the student. This requires that the school have adequate translation and assistance resources available to accomplish this screening. Failing to properly screen the incoming students means that the entire district is out of compliance with ESSA.

Schools that identify students as ELs, and thus receive ESL services, must screen those students and inform their parents of this identification within thirty days of enrollment (USDOJ, 2015b). The time frame for identifying possible EL students during the school year is typically ten to fourteen days. Because there is no hierarchy of ELs, we use the honeycomb graphic shown in figure I.1 (page 6) as a visual to keep in mind that, while different ELs may have different needs, they are equal members of the classroom, just as the general education non-EL students are.