



Guide for Spoken Language Interpreters in Education Series

English Language Development Programs and Services

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Educational interpreters often work with parents whose children may be eligible to receive language support services or are already enrolled in an English development program. As a result, school-parent interactions may involve communication about language use in the home, the assessment of the child's language proficiency, the type of language services or program available to the child, and the educational progress of the child in addition to communication about other school business. Being familiar with identification procedures and the various types of

language support programs, including those that involve native language, will be helpful during these interactions. This chapter will provide a brief look at the legal obligation of public schools to provide appropriate services to students learning English, the assessment of English proficiency, and the most common English language development service models. The term "emergent bilingual" will be used to describe students who need language support services.

Public schools in the U.S. are legally obligated to provide English language development services to students who are not yet proficient in English. At the federal level, this legal obligation is rooted in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. Since that time, legal decisions, laws governing education, and federal guidance documents have provided increasing clarity about this obligation. In addition, discretionary funding practices, political views, and research on language learning have shaped how students who come from homes where a language other than or in addition to English are provided with relevant services. A full history of the development of programs for emergent bilingual students is beyond the scope of this chapter, but several key positive influences will be mentioned. *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) was a class action lawsuit brought by Chinese parents against the San Francisco schools that resulted in a Supreme Court decision clearly placing responsibility on the district for providing an education that considered the English learning needs of students. Without such an education, the Court found that students were unable to benefit from meaningful education.

More recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) added to previous legislation by requiring that states standardize their entrance and exit procedures for emergent bilingual students and that potential emergent bilingual students be assessed for language status within 30 days of enrollment. A series of federal guidance documents written for school leaders have also been helpful in describing the steps districts should take in fulfilling their legal obligations. One guidance document, issued jointly by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2015), addresses obligations to emergent bilingual students and parents. Currently, federal policy requires appropriate identification, assessment, and high-quality instruction of emergent bilingual students but does not specify how these goals are to

be fulfilled, leaving decisions at the state and local levels (see Figure 1).

Identification and Assessment of Emergent Bilinguals

Home Language Surveys

Home language surveys are the cornerstone of identification of emergent bilingual students in most school systems across the U.S. and are required to be completed by family members when enrolling students in K-12 public schools for the first time (Bailey & Kelly, 2013). The purpose of the home language survey is to collect information about the use of languages other than English in the home by the family and/or the student as the first step in determining whether a student might need language support services (see Figure 2). In many cases, they are available in the parents' home language. Local educational agencies began using such surveys in the wake of the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols*' decision to ensure students could effectively participate in their education.

While the surveys are helpful in identifying potential emergent bilinguals, experts have pointed out a number of areas for improvement. For example, the questions on the surveys tend to vary from state-to-state and, in some states, even from district-to-district, leading to inconsistency in identification and lack of uniform data collection (Bailey & Kelly, 2013; Lazarin & Park, 2021).

Figure 1 *Responsibilities of Local Education Agencies (LEA) to Emerging Bilinguals (EB)*

LEAs cannot...	LEAs must...
Exclude students from educational programming because of inability to speak or understand English	Identify potential EBs
Assign students to special education as a result of their emerging language skills	Assess students to determine appropriate EB services
Provide school notices and other information to families whose English is limited in English only	Develop effective English language development programs
	Provide necessary staff, curricular materials, and facilities
	Develop appropriate evaluation standards and exit criteria for measuring student progress
	Assess program success and modify as needed

Note: For additional information see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html> , a web-based resource from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Students identified as emergent bilingual in one state or district may not be identified as such in another state or even within another district in the same state. In addition, the wording of questions on some home language surveys may make it difficult for families to answer

truthfully for fear of repercussions concerning their citizenship status or educational opportunities for their child (Abedi 2008). Similar issues exist in public preschool programs, but states including Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota as well as the Fresno Unified School District in California have begun to provide more guidance about the identification process for young emergent bilinguals (Lazarín & Park, 2021).

Language Proficiency Screening

While home language surveys are used to identify possible emergent bilingual students, language proficiency screening tools are used to assess the level of English development in this pool of students for instructional and placement purposes. The ESSA (2015) requires that states identify which students need language support services within 30 days of enrollment. The ESSA (2015) also requires that states use language proficiency screeners for this purpose but does not designate specific tools. Some states have developed their own screeners that all districts use, while other states allow choices. Oregon, for example, has five state-approved screeners from which districts can choose (Lazarín & Park, 2021). One popular screener is the WIDA screener.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison is home to the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, a group of 41 states dedicated to the design and implementation of high-quality instruction and assessment of linguistically diverse students (WIDA, 2022). The WIDA screener is an English language proficiency assessment that can be given to students in kindergarten through 12th grade at any point in the school year to identify students as emergent bilinguals. The screener assesses the four language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while also providing composite scores for oral language and literacy as well as an overall score.

Figure 2 Sample of a Home Language Survey in Spanish and English

Spanish Español	
Encuesta del idioma en el Hogar	
<p>El estado requiere que el distrito recoja información en una Encuesta del Idioma que se Habla en el Hogar (Home Language Survey o HLS por sus siglas en inglés) para cada estudiante nuevo. Esta información se usa para contar a los estudiantes cuyas familias hablan en el hogar un idioma que no es inglés. También ayuda a identificar a los estudiantes que necesitan ser evaluados para la fluidez en el idioma inglés.</p>	
<p>Por favor, conteste las preguntas a continuación y devuelva esta encuesta a la escuela de su niño.</p>	
<p>Nombre del estudiante: _____</p>	
<p>1. ¿Se habla en su casa otro idioma que no es el inglés?</p>	
<p>Si _____ No _____ ¿Cuál? _____</p>	
<p>2. ¿Habla su niño(a) un idioma que no es el inglés?</p>	
<p>Si _____ No _____ ¿Cuál? _____</p>	
<p>Si la respuesta a cualquiera de las preguntas es "Si", la ley requiere que la escuela evalúe la fluidez de su niño en el idioma inglés.</p>	
Firma del Padre/Madre/Encargado/Tutor Legal	Fecha
English	
Home Language Survey	
<p>The state requires the district to collect a Home Language Survey for every new student. This information is used to count the students whose families speak a language other than English at home. It also helps to identify the students who need to be assessed for English language proficiency.</p>	
<p>Please answer the question below and return the survey to your child's at school.</p>	
<p>Student's Name: _____</p>	
<p>1. Is a language other than English spoken in your home?</p>	
<p>Yes _____ No _____ Which language? _____</p>	
<p>2. Does your child speak a language other than English?</p>	
<p>Yes _____ No _____ Which language? _____</p>	
<p>If the answer to either question is yes, the law requires the school to assess your child's English language proficiency.</p>	
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature	Date

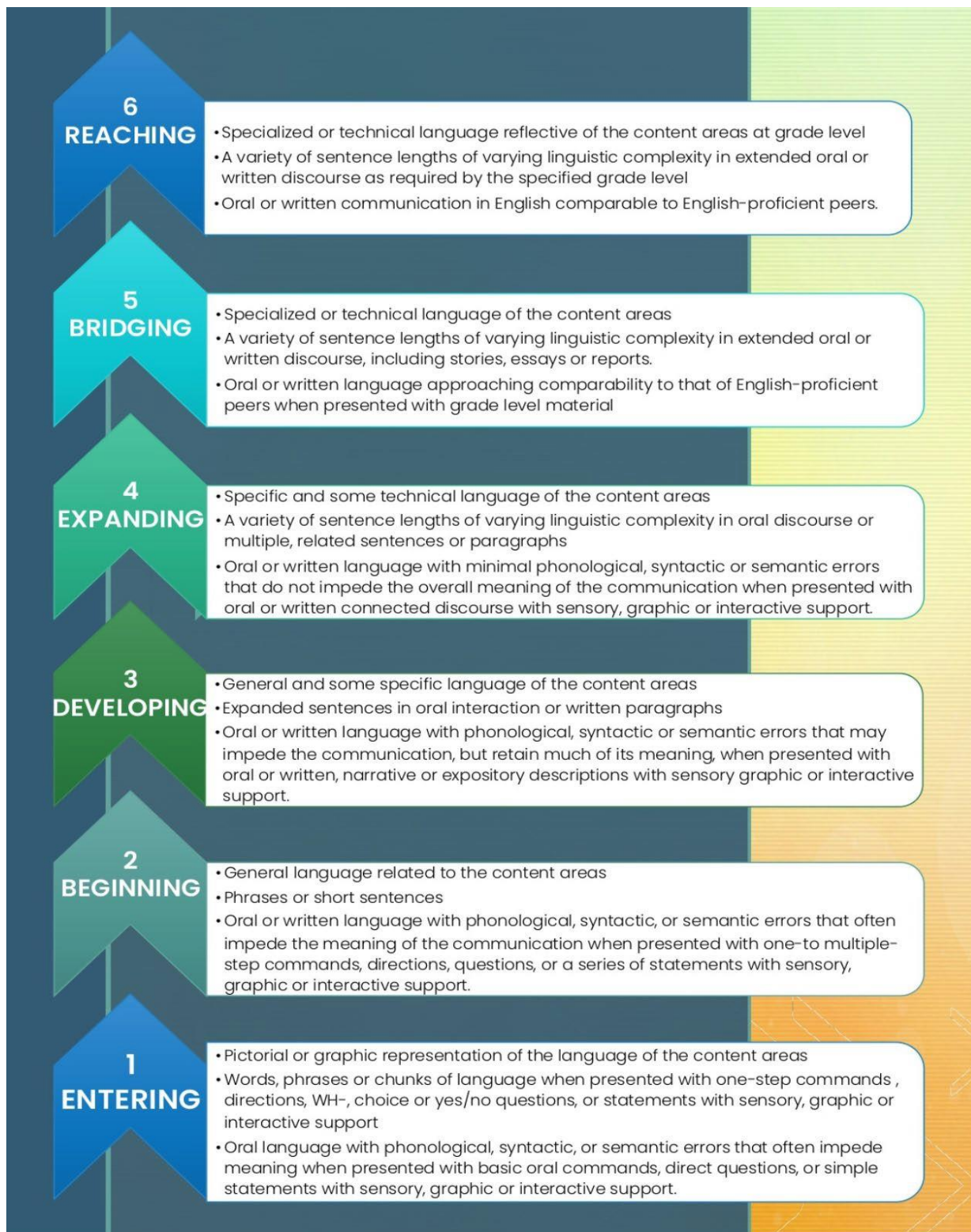
Note: This version of the Home Language Survey is used in Illinois. It is available in over 50 languages representing the language diverse population in the state. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Screening-for-English-Language-Proficiency.aspx>

Depending on the screening instrument, language proficiency is often described in terms of levels that range from beginning to developed. WIDA uses a six-level framework that provides characteristics of the language that students are able to process, understand, produce, or use at each level (see Figure 3). Proficiency levels range from Entering to Reaching, which is the highest score possible and reflects native-like English proficiency.

Progress Monitoring

Another requirement of ESSA (2015) is for local education agencies to document student progress towards English proficiency. As such, the English language skills of emergent bilingual students are assessed yearly, but states have latitude in deciding the assessment tools to be used. WIDA provides a yearly assessment that may be used to meet this requirement called ACCESS (WIDA, 2022). Anchored in the WIDA English language development standards, the ACCESS test assesses listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in students in kindergarten through 12th grade in a more comprehensive way than the WIDA screener. ACCESS scores are used not only for accountability purposes, but also to determine reclassification or exit of students from language services as well as educational placement and grouping and progress in English proficiency.

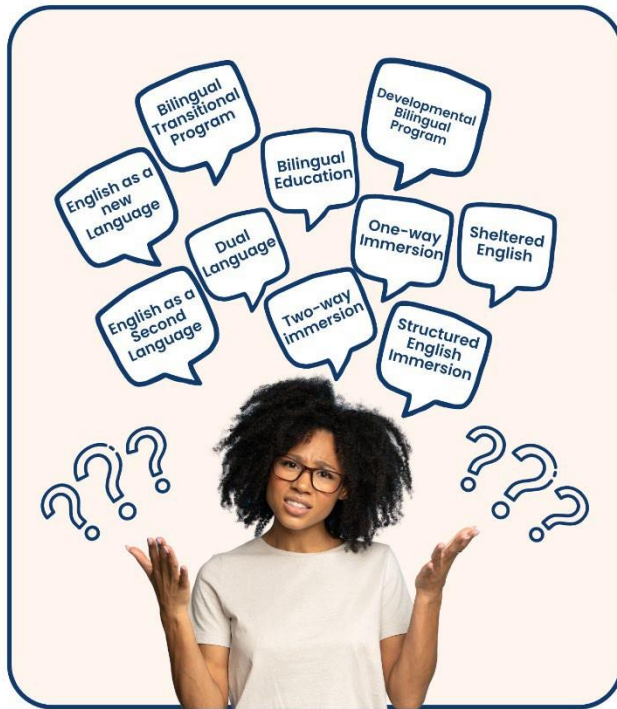
Figure 3 *Functional Description of WIDA Proficiency Levels*



Instructional Models

Once schools have identified students as emergent bilinguals, students must be provided with appropriate language assistance services and programs that enable them to attain English proficiency (ESSA, 2015). As in the realm of identification and assessment, federal policy gives states and districts latitude in deciding the types of instructional programs to be offered. Programs may be broadly divided into those that develop English and the home or other language, i.e., bilingual education, and those that focus only or primarily on the development of English, i.e., English- focused programs. The intent of most language assistance programs for emergent bilinguals in the U.S. has been to teach students English as quickly as possible, with little regard to maintenance of the home language (Gandara & Escamilla, 2017).

Historically, there has been hostility and restriction to bilingual education and its goal of developing literacy in both languages (Nieto, 2009). The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided monetary incentives to school districts for the purpose of implementing new pedagogical approaches that targeted emergent bilingual students, including approaches that utilized home language. However, it was not until the 1974 amendment to the Bilingual Education Act that bilingual programs were explicitly defined and the goals of the programs identified (Nieto, 2009). The majority of states offer bilingual and English-focused language development programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), but bilingual education offerings tend to be more limited than English-focused instructional programs.



What's in a Name?

The titles of language assistance programs for emergent bilingual students vary and being able to tell from a name exactly what a program involves is difficult. To be sure, ask about the goal of the program, the extent to which home language and English will be used, and how long students typically stay in the program.

English-Focused Program Models

English as a Second Language

The purpose of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs is to develop English language and literacy as well as to make academic content accessible to students while they are learning English. ESL programs are especially useful for local education agencies (LEA) with a language diverse student population. For ESL instruction, the teacher does not need to be proficient in the students' home languages but is required to have specialized training. There are various ways to provide ESL programming (Sugarman, 2018). In elementary schools, where students tend to stay in the same classroom across subjects, the pull-out model is common. Students leave their classroom to spend a small part of the day with the ESL teacher. In secondary schools, students typically attend an

ESL class as part of their departmentalized day. Other models include co-teaching, where an ESL teacher and a general or special education teacher collaboratively deliver instruction, and push-in, where an ESL teacher joins the general or special education class to work with target students. ESL programs do not include instruction in the home language, but the home language may be used to support the development of English.

Structured English Immersion

Structured English Immersion (SEI) is one of several types of ESL instruction. In SEI, English language instruction precedes content-area instruction in order to build English language skills to ensure readiness for content-area instruction (Henderson & Ambroso, 2018). Teachers in an SEI classroom use English as the medium of instruction 70 to 90 percent of the time, with the home language being used sporadically to clarify instruction (Baker, 1998). In this program model, students are typically mainstreamed into general education classrooms within two to three years.

The SEI model was implemented state-wide in Arizona, California, and Massachusetts in the wake of English-only legislation in the late 1990s/early 2000s that dismantled other models in place for English learners. Although previous research indicated the success of SEI with emergent bilinguals (Baker, 1998), research out of Arizona following implementation of the model showed quite the opposite (Davenport, 2008). Traditional SEI models moved students away from SEI classrooms within about three years, but California and Arizona state laws required students to be moved within one year, which may have contributed to the poor student outcomes (Davenport, 2008). California and Massachusetts have since repealed their English-only instruction

legislation and now offer various program options, including bilingual education (Mitchell, 2017; Mongeau, 2016).

Newcomer Programs

For newly arrived older students or those with interrupted formal education, newcomer programs offer specialized services and classes. These programs are designed to help newcomers acclimate to U.S. schools, develop foundational skills in content areas, and prepare for inclusion into more traditional language assistance programs (NCELA, 2017). While these programs focus on English language development, however, the home language may be used to support instruction. Not all districts have this kind of specialized programming and, where services are available, they typically have a duration of no more than one year.

Bilingual Program Models

Transitional Bilingual Programs

The goal of Transitional Bilingual Programs (TBP) is to transition students to English-only classrooms as soon as possible, using the home language for support as needed. As proficiency in English increases, instruction in the home language decreases. How fast that occurs depends on whether the TBP is an early exit program in which students transition to English only in two to three years or a late exit program in which students transition at a slower pace (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016). The time dedicated to home language instruction and to English within these programs varies across classrooms and, particularly in early-exit programs, students tend to lose literacy skills in their home language

(Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016). Less common are bilingual developmental or maintenance programs where the goal is for students to develop full literacy skills in English and the home language.

Dual Language Programs

Dual language programs, sometimes referred to as two-way immersion programs, are unique in that they combine students who speak a home language other than English and monolingual English speakers in the same classroom for instruction in both languages (De La Garza, Mackinney & Lavigne, 2015). For example, in a kindergarten dual language classroom, students might spend about 90% of their day learning content in the non-English home language (e.g., Spanish, Mandarin or Arabic), learning first to read in the home language and eventually learning to read in English. More English time is slowly added with each grade after that until about 4th grade when students spend 50% of their day in each language (Lindholm-Leary, 2013). However, there are many variations of dual language programs depending on the composition of students from each language and how teachers combine or separate the languages of instruction across content areas. Currently, dual language programs are most common in elementary schools, but some middle and high schools are also beginning to offer a dual language option.

Conclusion

Enrolling students in school triggers a series of events that begins when families fill out a home language survey and indicate the presence of another language in the home. After screening, if students are found to need English language assistance, they are then placed in one of a myriad of program models available. The framework for providing

support to emergent bilingual students depends largely on district demographics, funding availability and district resources, primarily human resources. Although the federal government requires specialized programs, philosophical and political beliefs of state and local boards of education and school communities influence the ultimate adoption and implementation of service models. Educational interpreters will find it helpful to understand the assessment process and instructional models being implemented in the schools they serve. Information about serving emergent bilinguals is often available on the websites of local districts and state departments of education. Regardless of the kind of framework used, students should feel supported and their academics encouraged so that they may grow educationally.

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Dr. Wendy Gonzales is currently an assistant professor in the College of Education at Northeastern Illinois University where she teaches courses in special, early childhood, and bilingual/ESL education. She earned her Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Wendy has over 10 years of experience as a bilingual special education teacher and has worked in a variety of districts in the Chicago area. Her research interests are in the areas of bilingual education, reading development, and learning disabilities. Having attended a multitude of meetings with families receiving special education services, Wendy sees educational interpreters as the link between home and school for families whose primary language is not English. It is through the work of educational interpreters, that linguistically diverse families can actively engage and participate in the education of their child.