

The Jackson County School District assures that it will comply with the following for English Learners (EL):

1. The district will identify English Learners (EL) through a home language survey, which will be completed by all students during registration.
2. The district will provide equal access to all district programs and services for all English Learners (EL).
3. The district will provide appropriate and comparable staff training, professional development opportunities, and instructional materials for serving English Learners (EL).
4. The district will monitor and maintain student records and provide support services as indicated.
5. The district will invite parental involvement and maximize attempts to communicate with parents in their native language.
6. The district English Learner (EL) program will be administered under the direction of the Director of Federal Programs and EL Coordinator.

Purpose:

The purpose of the English Learner Policy is to outline the procedures the Jackson County School District (JCSD) will follow to ensure that all non-English speaking students are provided a free appropriate public education and any additional services required to attain proficiency in the English language.

Enrollment:

The Jackson County School District will provide a free and equitable education to all school age children who live within the boundaries of JCSD, regardless of immigration status. Several laws protect the rights of English Learners (ELs) and their families, particularly during the enrollment process. These protections are provided because many EL students' levels of transiency and lack of English proficiency make them a particularly vulnerable population.

When enrolling students, JCSD will not request any information from students or their parents or guardians in order to deny access to public schools on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Jackson County School District requires the following documents when enrolling a student unless otherwise indicated as optional:

- Birth Certificate
- Proof of Immunization
- 2 Proofs of Residency

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) must be present when enrolling their child. A child will not be enrolled if a parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is not present at the time of enrollment.

Identification of English Learner:

The Home Language Survey (HLS) must be completed for each new student registering with the JCSD. The HLS is used to identify students whose first language is not English. The HLS should remain in the student's cumulative folder until graduation. If any response on the HLS indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home, then further assessment must be conducted to determine the student's English language proficiency.

The LAS Links Placement Test is be used to determine the level of English proficiency and to facilitate appropriate instructional and program placement decisions. Students identified by the HLS during registration whose first language is a language other than English at the beginning of the school year must be assessed for English-language proficiency within 30 calendar days of initial day of enrollment. Students who register after the beginning of the school year and indicate on the home language survey that their first language is a language other than English must be assessed within 10 school days of enrollment. The assessment will be administered by a School Counselor.

The student's placement test report must be placed in their cumulative record along with the original copy of the home language survey.

EL students who have already been identified in Jackson County School District will remain in the EL program if they leave the district for a district in another state or country and return to the Jackson County School District. The EL student will only be removed if he or she has met the criteria to exit the EL program set forth by MDE.

Elementary ELs should not be placed more than one grade level behind their peers. Retention is strongly discouraged, except in rare cases where it can be documented that language proficiency is not the likely cause for academic difficulties.

At the high school level, credits must be awarded based on transcripts provided by the students/parents/guardians, even if the course work was taken in another country. If transcripts are in a language other than English, translations will be sought so credits can be awarded appropriately. ELs must be provided with access to Advanced Placement, dual credit, and other advanced courses. ELs must receive language supports to assist them in accessing academic content, just as they would if they were in other less accelerated academic courses.

When EL students enroll in U.S. schools for the first time at the secondary level, steps will be taken to ensure they have access to a high school diploma. To ensure ELs have access to the foundational skills needed to be successful in high school and ensure access to graduation, Jackson County School District will place students in academic courses sequentially. English I, II, III, and IV will be offered, scheduled, and taught in sequential order. Simultaneous enrollment is acceptable in situations where a student failed a course and needs to simultaneously enroll. EL students will not be placed out of sequence to prevent them from taking required assessments.

Parent Notification:

Parents of a student who qualifies for English language services shall be sent a notice of placement and services within thirty days of the start of the school year or within ten days for students ruled eligible enrolling after the initial day of school. The notice may either be mailed to the parent or guardian or sent home with the student. The Student Evaluation Team (SET) will invite the parent or guardian to a conference further explaining the ruling or the services that will be provided. The notification must include all of the required elements, including the right to opt out. Parents may decline EL services at any time by written request.

Any parent or guardian whose child is receiving or is eligible to receive EL services has the right to decline or opt his or her child out of any or all EL services. The district will provide guidance in a language parents or guardians can understand to ensure that they understand their child's rights, the range of EL services that their child could receive, and the benefits of such services to ensure that the parent or guardian's decision to opt out is informed and voluntary.

After ELs have been identified using the LAS Links Placement Test, the district must provide ELs with appropriate language assistance services and programs, commonly known as "EL Services and Programs." The district has the flexibility to choose the EL services and programs that meet civil rights requirements and best meet the needs of their EL population.

Language Service Plans:

Each student identified as an English Learner must have a Language Service Plan (LSP) per Mississippi Department of Education guidelines. Language Service Plans are updated annually until the student exits the EL program. The LSP must contain the student's demographic information, date of first enrollment in a US school, yearly LAS Links scores, and state/classroom accommodations. The SET must meet to develop the LSP at the beginning of each academic school year. The SET is composed of the student's teachers, EL teacher, administrators, counselor, and parents/guardians. The team will meet quarterly to evaluate the student's progress and make necessary adjustments. A copy of the LSP must be provided to all teachers who work with the EL student.

EL Data:

Once a student has been identified as an EL, the district must ensure the student is correctly marked in their student data package. This information will transfer over to MSIS once the district has submitted their data to MDE. Districts should ensure each column on the EL roster screen of MSIS is completed. This information should be updated monthly.

English Learner English Language Proficiency Assessment:

The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that all students identified as English Learners be assessed for English language proficiency on an annual basis. The current approved English language assessment is the LAS Links English Proficiency Assessment. The assessment is currently administered in the Spring.

The LAS Links English Proficiency Assessment measures four domains:

- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing

Students taking this assessment may or may not have reasonable accommodations when taking this assessment. The Mississippi Testing Accommodations Manual outlines the accommodations available for students who have been identified as English Learners.

Scores from the LAS Links English Proficiency assessment are usually received during the summer following the assessment. Score reports will be sent to parents or guardians at the beginning of the next school year. Copies of the score reports are placed in the student's cumulative folder. Reports for students who transfer to another school during the summer months are included with the record sent to the new school.

Grading and Retention:

As students are working to learn English during the initial stages of language acquisition, it is a violation of their Civil Rights to retain them due to limited language proficiency. Schools must ensure that EL students are placed appropriately and can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs as noted in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Opportunities Act of 1974.

Retention is not generally recommended for ELs. Though the decision to promote or retain will be made on a case-by-case basis, and the decision to retain an EL must be accompanied by documentation demonstrating that appropriate accommodations and modifications were employed throughout the school year to ensure compliance with federal requirements. ELs should be carefully evaluated before retention is recommended to ensure that the lack of English skills is not being mistaken for poor achievement.

Students Exiting the Program and Monitoring Exited Students:

Students may exit the EL program by achieving the following scores on the LAS Links English Proficiency assessment. (These are the only criteria allowed for a student to exit the program.)

- Overall Proficiency Score – Level 4 or 5 AND
- Reading Proficiency Score – Level 4 or 5 AND
- Writing Proficiency Score – Level 4 or 5.

An EL student with a disability can be “exited” from EL status when he or she no longer meets the definition of an EL. This occurs when the student meets the State’s definition of “proficient” in English. The student’s EL status cannot be removed based solely on the fact the student has an IEP.

Students who have achieved the proficiency levels above and exited the program must be monitored for a period of four academic years. Monitoring must be conducted and documented quarterly by the SET. Monitored students who are not achieving at a satisfactory level may be considered for placement in the EL program. The district will retest using the LAS Links Placement Test to see if the student needs to be offered additional language assistance.

English Learner Services and Instructional Support:

Students identified as English Learners must be provided with appropriate English Learner language assistance services. The district will provide English Learners with access to the content of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards and other services, including special education, gifted education, and extracurricular programs, as needed.

ELs will have meaningful access to the core curriculum, such as math, science, social studies and language arts, while learning English. While the district’s EL program focuses in part on language acquisition, both the EL teacher and academic teachers should work together to ensure that students are mastering the academic language needed to be successful.

The goal for students who are ELs is that they attain fluency in English, master the state’s academic content standards, and pass any other state required tests.

Jackson County School District will provide ELs with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful. Federal law does not require any particular program or method of instruction. An EL should be given at least 30 minutes of direct language instruction in a day in the English language. This instruction can occur within the regular classroom setting.

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework for effective team-based problem solving that is data informed, evidence-based, and flexible enough to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. With MTSS, schools identify struggling students, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness. Schools also identify students with learning disabilities, language barriers, and/or other disabilities. English Learner students with learning disabilities can also be identified using this methodology.

English Learner Programs, Staffing and Resources:

Jackson County School District currently provides individualized or small group services to the students identified as English Learners. Students work with an EL tutor during a time that does not interfere with regular classroom instruction. Necessary resources are provided by the school district to conduct the program.

Parent and Family Engagement:

Jackson County School District has a legal obligation to communicate meaningfully with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents and families and to adequately notify them of information about any program, service or activity called to the attention of non-LEP parents. Successful communication provides LEP parents, guardians, and families with the school-related information they need to make informed decisions about, and be helpful participants in, their children's education. This may include but not be limited to information about language assistance programs, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, requests for parent or guardian permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, and gifted programs.

Jackson County School District will provide information to LEP parents and guardians with documents in a language they can understand when necessary.