

## Informational Bulletin No. 3

# Reasons to Evaluate a Language Assistance Program: Are We Making Progress?



**Jacqueline A. Iribarren, Ph.D.**  
**Title III, ESL & Bilingual Education Consultant**

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## **Reasons to Evaluate the Language Assistance Program**

The state of Wisconsin serves students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELLs) in a variety of language assistance programs. Language assistance programs have a variety of instructional delivery methods that should be appropriate and tailored to the individual needs of English language learners. These services include classroom instructional delivery methods and strategies (e.g., adaptation, accommodation, differentiation, etc.) and support & supplemental services that are carefully crafted to enhance learning opportunities for ELLs. Hiring ESL teachers is one way to meet the legal requirements but it is not the only way to be in compliance with federal laws pertaining to the education of ELLs. In Wisconsin, when a critical mass of Spanish-speaking ELLs has been reached, districts must implement a Bilingual Education (BE) program (see <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/bilingual-bicultural.html> for more details). In general, with this program, districts must hire a bilingually certified teacher. It is important to remember, that even though the program is called “bilingual”, the use of native language varies across classrooms and individual buildings. The current state statute does not prescribe how to deliver such a program or how to utilize native language support. The final goal of any programming and support services is to develop students’ English literacy and academic skills.

Individual school districts with parental input make instructional decisions to determine which program best addresses each student’s language and academic needs. Participation in these programs or services requires parental permission. Likewise, the program or services depend on the student’s English language proficiency, grade level, and resources availability. Current best practices for ELLs support the use of an Education Learning Plan (ELP), an education plan that outlines individual academic needs and supports rendered by the school personnel. Like a special education plan, this document contains what the student needs in order to be successful, learning objectives, outcomes, and timelines. This document can also serve as main communication tool for meeting the parental requirements under Title III (please see Parental Notification for more information <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/titleiii.html>). In general, this document should not be static but fluid as the student progresses through the continuum of language learning and academic achievement needs & gains. That is, the plan should be regularly reviewed and revised as needed per the student’s academic performance, learning objectives, language progress, and academic needs.

Since the majority of our English language learners are served by Title III funds, per Title III requirements, states must evaluate the effectiveness of state level activities conducted, including how these activities have improved the school districts' performance in assisting ELLs to achieve English proficiency and meet states' academic standards. Therefore, this review should serve to evaluate your district's language instruction program for compliance with Title III requirements.

The following section provides a general overview of the legal mandates that require districts to evaluate their programs that serve English language learners.



### **Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Programs for English Language learners must be evaluated for soundness. The Supreme Court case of *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981) concluded that "appropriate action to overcome language barriers" must be taken through well implemented programs. The court decision established a three-part assessment for determining how bilingual education programs would be held responsible for meeting the requirements of the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974. The criteria are listed below:

1. Existence of a pedagogically sound plan for ELL students.
2. Sufficient qualified staff to implement the plan (includes hiring of new staff and training of current staff).
3. A system established to evaluate the program.

With that said, the OCR policy is the following: Districts are required to modify their programs if they prove to be unsuccessful after a legitimate trial. As a practical matter, recipients cannot comply with this requirement without periodically evaluating their programs.

Generally, districts measure "success" in terms of whether the program is achieving the particular goals the district has established for the program and its students. If the district has established no particular goals, the program is successful if its participants are achieving proficiency in English and are able to participate meaningfully in the district's program".

### **Title I: No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**

Districts and schools are held accountable for the progress of English language learners in meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP). The LEA will use the results of the student academic assessments required under section 1111(b)(3), and other measures or indicators available to the agency to: a) review annually the progress of each school served by the agency and receiving funds under Title I to determine whether all of the schools are making the progress necessary to ensure that all students will meet the state's proficient level of achievement on the state academic assessment.

### **Bilingual-Bicultural Program (Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 13.04)**

Wisconsin is one of the states that receive state funding for a creation of a bilingual-bicultural program. The state statute on bilingual-bicultural education requires a written plan of services when a district enrolls at least the following numbers of ELLs, from one language population, in one school, in at least one of the specified grade clusters:

- 10 students in grades K-3
- 20 students in grades 4-8
- 20 students in grades 9-12

Districts meeting the above criteria, in one or more schools, are eligible for state categorical aid if all other statutorily set requirements are met (please see Bilingual-Bicultural programs for more information: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/bilingual-bicultural.html>). According to the state statute, applicants that apply for the state funding, assure that each limited-English proficient pupil shall be provided with a program that is appropriate for his or her needs. The statute furthermore states that each pupil shall have full access to support services such as, but not limited to, language development, speech therapy, counseling and other such programs. As a condition of this funding, DPI shall report the number of pupils in each school district and language group who as a result of participation in a bilingual-bicultural education program improved their English language ability to such an extent that the program is no longer necessary for such pupils.

### **Title III: No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**

Districts receiving Title III funds shall expend the funds to improve the education of limited English proficient children, by assisting the children to speak, read, write and comprehend the English language and meet challenging state academic content and student academic

achievement standards. That means, the LEA shall use curriculum, and instructional approaches and methodologies based in scientifically based research on teaching limited English proficient children and youth and that has been demonstrated to be effective. The district or LEA (consortium) must conduct evaluations and prepare progress reports as required by the department and the Acts. These evaluations will be used to determine and improve the effectiveness of the LEA English language assistance program and activities for ELL students and immigrant students.

In particular, students must make the **Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs)**: Students must make **progress** (AMAO#1) in language acquisition, **attainment** (AMAO#2) and AYP on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) (AMAO#3). Per Title III regulations, all three AMOAs must be met in order to meet this requirement.

## **SUMMARY**

Evaluation of program effectiveness is definitely a requirement under various legal authorities. Conducting timely program reviews provide an opportunity for districts to build upon identified strengths, address areas for improvement, and forces alignment between LEA practices and actions needed to increase program outcomes. It is recommended that a team of educators is assembled to conduct a thorough review. The team should also be connected to the school's continuous improvement planning team for added collaboration and program alignment. It is recommended that a conglomerate of school-wide factors also be part of this review. Factors to consider include attendance rate, dropout rate, suspension rate, expulsion rates, participation rate in co-curricular/extracurricular activities, student attitude and interest survey results, longitudinal performance data, achievement data, special education placements and referrals and participation in Gifted and Talented programming.

It should be noted that parental notification is an important part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Schools are required to provide timely information and notices to parents about their children's school, academic progress, teacher qualifications and more. Schools must make reasonable efforts to present the information in an understandable format and in a language parents can understand. Besides timely parental notification, Title I and Title III also emphasize that such parental involvement be meaningful and substantial. Please review the Parental Notification requirements for more detailed information <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/titleiii.html>.

APPENDIX A  
(SAMPLE)

**Program Evaluation: School Improvement Planning Checklist**

School/District \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

We must ensure that our programs whether small or large are in fact effective since school districts are being held accountable for their language acquisition (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) **and** knowledge of academic content area (Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP), how do we help students meet the language and academic requirements at the same time?

As each school begins to assess its programming for ELL students, it is important to remember 3 main points:

- It takes the whole school, including administrators to address the ELL students. *ELL students are within the school and school system, not just in a “program”.*
- It takes teachers willing and able to give differentiated instruction to meet the needs of ELL students. *ELL students are required to have content area instruction and are in regular classrooms in most districts.*
- All students will succeed if kept to high expectations. *ELL students are not necessarily limited in education.*

Please use the following questions below to evaluate your programs and services for ELL students. It is essential that each school keep accurate and up-to-date data for each ELL student. ELL student growth should be measured through language proficiency testing, as well as academic content testing and classroom grades. Also, please align your practices to the recently published Bulletins, **Title III-Related ESEA Information Update Bulletins**, located: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/titleiii.html>.

<b>Initial Questions</b>	Yes	No	Comments
<b>IDENTIFICATION and ASSESSMENT</b>			
Is the school aware of the District’s ELL Plan? Is the ELL Plan being implemented within the school?			
Is the school administration aware of the legal requirements pertaining to identifying and placing ELL students? Does every student have a Home Language Survey (HLS) on file?			
Are all possible new ELL students being first screened using the WIDA screener (W-APT), and if identified as possible ELL, then given the ACCESS Test in the fall/spring?			
Is the school administration aware of the requirement to address the individual needs of each ELL student?			
Do ELL students have an Educational Learning Plan (ELP), inclusive of language goals and benchmarks, if they are given accommodations or adaptations within the classroom and subsequently on assessments?			
Is the school using both formative and summative assessment and language proficiency assessment data to guide instruction for individual students?			
<b>PROGRAMMING and EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES</b>			

Is the program addressing the needs of ELL students within each content area (i.e. Math, Science, as well as language acquisition)?			
Is the entire faculty and administration aware of the ELL students and their needs within the school?			
Are all teachers utilizing the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) as a tool and entry point in teaching ELL students?			
Are the ELL students placed in pull out ESL classrooms? If so, are they learning content area vocabulary and skills?			
If ELL students are taught within the classroom, are they receiving additional assistance with language instruction? Are ELL students being served within the regular classroom?			
Are ELL students learning content knowledge and skills, as well as making progress in learning the English language?			
Is the curriculum for ELL students challenging and academically based?			
Does the district have a content-based ELL Plan in place? How will the ELL students learn throughout their content classes?			
Is your school/district providing before/after or summer school programs for ELL students?			
Do the district and school make it a priority to allocate district funding to serve ELL students?			
<b>STAFFING and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>			
Do regular classroom teachers have the resources, skills and knowledge to address the needs of ELL students in their classroom?			
Are content teachers trained in specific methodologies to target ELL students?			
If ESL teachers are teaching content area, do they have certification in the specific content area, as well as their ESL certification?			
Are middle and high school ELL students receiving specific attention in each class?			
Is there an accountability plan in place for all teachers to take ownership of the ELL students in their classroom and serve them with effective instructional practices?			
Is the administration of the school encouraging of all teachers to implement best & effective teaching practices to ELL students?			
Does the school have mainly paraprofessionals serving the ELL students? Why?			
Is the main service for ELL students just translating? Is there academic learning in the translation?			
<b>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</b>			
Are parents of ELL students given notifications in their home language?			
Are parents of ELL students included in decisions within the school?			
Are parents informed and given educational information regarding the school system and how to help their children at home?			
<b>PROGRAM EVALUATION and REVIEW</b>			
Is the school keeping complete data for each student in order to calculate growth in language proficiency from year to year?			

Is the school evaluating the programs and services annually?			
Who is responsible for monitoring services and determine if they are effective and make changes, if necessary?			
<b>EXITING STUDENTS</b>			
Is the school creating a data system to track the achievement of Former ELL students (FLEP)?			
Is the school in agreement to the elements of data to include in the monitoring criteria for Former ELL students?			
Is the school, at least annually, monitoring the progress of Former ELL students (FLEP)?			
<b>SPECIAL EDUCATION &amp; TALENTED/GIFTED</b>			
How does the district/school ensures that ELL students are not overrepresented in special education.			
How does the district/school ensures that ELL students are not underrepresented in gifted/talented (G/T) education.			
<b>DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS MADE BY ELLS</b>			
Describe the progress made by ELL students in learning English and meeting academic standards			
Describe the progress made by ELL students in meeting State academic content and student achievement standards for each of the two years after they no longer receive ESL services. Describe the district/school monitoring process.			
Describe the parent involvement activities conducted by the district/school. Address specifically in this description the process used by the district/school to notify parents of ELL students about: school required and optional activities; language acquisition program placement; and failure of the school to meet AMAOs			
<b>STATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE</b>			
Did the state offer technical assistance in regards to instructional programs and curricula for ELLs?			
Did the state assist in developing improvement plans and other technical assistance to districts/schools failing to meet AMAOs for two or more consecutive years?			

(Acknowledgments: Idaho Department of Education & Utah Title III Office)

## References

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