



Language Access Plan

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While Seattle Public Schools endeavors to only post documents optimized for accessibility, due to the nature and complexity of some documents, an accessible version of the document may not be available. In these limited circumstances, the District will provide equally effective alternate access.

For questions and more information about this document, please contact the following:

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Seattle Public School's Language Access Plan is a guidance tool to strengthen partnerships with our culturally and linguistically diverse families. It is designed to implement Seattle School Board Policy 4218 and aims to enhance meaningful two-way communication with families who have limited English proficiency, ensuring they can effectively access the programs, services, and activities provided in our schools.



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

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What is Language Access?

“The Seattle School Board recognizes that students and their family members who speak multiple languages are assets to the community and is committed to providing **equitable access for families to participate in their students’ education by addressing language barriers**, free of charge.”

Seattle School Board Policy 4218

Multilingualism is an asset



The Language Access Plan

“Seattle Public Schools (SPS) is committed to eliminating opportunity gaps to ensure access and provide excellence in education for every student.” (*SPS Mission*) For students and families who speak languages other than English, this involves dismantling language barriers. The School Board and Superintendent recognize the importance of providing consistent language support for students and parents or guardians whose preferred language is not English. By communicating essential educational information in the preferred language of families, schools foster greater involvement, thereby enhancing student success and ultimately reducing opportunity gaps.

Purpose

Seattle Public School's Language Access Plan is a guidance tool for staff to strengthen partnerships with our culturally and linguistically diverse families. It is designed to implement Seattle School Board Policy 4218 and aims to enhance meaningful two-way communication with families who have limited English proficiency, ensuring they can effectively access the programs, services, and activities provided in our schools.

Culturally Responsive Language Access Program

This plan adheres to the following key principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systematic family engagement:

1. Accessibility and equity

This ensures that schools provide access for all, with essential two-way communication integrated into all programs and services.

2. Accountability and transparency

This ensures the language access program is open, user-friendly, and responsive to feedback, with a clear complaint process.

3. Responsive culture

Schools are safe, compassionate spaces where families are heard and valued. Staff are empathetic.

4. Focus on relationships

Schools seek to understand families without judgment, building trust through respectful relationships.



**2-Way
Communication**

Definitions



Identification of Families Needing Language Access Services

The process by which Seattle Public Schools identifies Limited English Proficient (LEP) or multilingual families through the Home Language Survey (HLS) that is part of the enrollment process.

Interpretation

The process of first fully understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed message and then faithfully rendering it into another spoken or signed language.

Interpreter

A trained spoken language or sign language interpreter who can interpret for students' families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom.

Language Services

A broad spectrum of services used or required to facilitate communication and understanding between speakers of different languages and typically includes interpretation and translation services.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Individuals who are limited in their ability to communicate effectively in English either verbally or in writing, or both, because their primary language is not English, and they have not developed fluency in the

English language. A person with limited English proficiency may have difficulty in one or more of four domains of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Staff are urged to remember that limited English proficiency may be context-specific—e.g., a parent may have sufficient English language skills to understand, communicate and/or exchange basic information with a teacher, but they may not have sufficient skills to communicate detailed, specific information

needed in a particular context, like an IEP meeting, a 504 meeting, or a student discipline hearing.

Multilingual

Individuals who have the ability to communicate effectively in language(s) which may not be English, either verbally or in writing, or both.

Preferred Language

The language that a student, student's parent or guardian, prefers to use in communications. This may or may not be the primary language.

Primary Language

The primary language spoken by a student, student's parent or guardian, or the predominant language spoken in the student's home.

Qualified Interpreter

An interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively using necessary specialized vocabulary.

Translation

The process of communicating the meaning of a written source-language text into an equivalent target language text in such a way that the content of both texts can be considered the same.



Language Services



Seattle Public Schools honors and values the involvement of parents and guardians who speak different languages in their child's education. We are dedicated to helping families with translation and interpretation services. In October 2022, the Seattle School Board updated [Policy No. 4218 Language Access](#). This policy ensures that parents and guardians can get information about their child's education in a language they understand.

Parents' Rights Information Sheet: Interpretation and Translation Services

Under state and federal law, **all parents have the right to information about their child's education in a language they can understand.**

The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has issued this [information sheet](#) detailing the rights of parents to receive clear communication about their child's education. This document is available in multiple languages on the [OSPI Website](#).

Seattle Public Schools offers free translation and interpretation services to all families in our top five languages: Amharic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. For additional languages, the district works with Linguistica and Lionbridge to provide "over the phone" interpretation.

- Families should reach out to their student's school for support in interpretation.
- For further details, visit the SPS [Multilingual Translation and Interpretation](#) webpage.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Language Access Services in Seattle Public Schools

SPS uses a variety of tools and methods to communicate with families who speak multiple languages. These include:

- District translation staff who translate district-wide communications and documents in our top five languages: Amharic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
- SPS collaborates with Lionbridge and Linguistica to provide over-the-phone interpreters in over 350 languages. All district staff can and should use this service.

- If requested, the district will provide interpreters for district-sponsored events, like school board meetings.
- Schools can use multilingual instructional assistants to help translate documents for school buildings (like principal newsletters). These assistants may also be asked to interpret at family conferences or school events, **but the primary role of the bilingual instructional assistant is to provide instructional support.**
- For interpretation at meetings about IEPs, enrollment, 504 plans, discipline, truancy, or graduation, school staff can contact languages@seattleschools.org or call 206-743-3549.
- ASL interpreters are available upon request. Staff should reach out to their School Building 504 Coordinator for ASL interpretation for parents of General Education students or students with 504 Civil Rights protections during school hours or for Parent/Teacher conferences.
- The district partners with TalkingPoints to provide two-way machine-human-translated text in over 100 home languages.
- The district homepage has language tabs for Amharic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Additionally, all content on district and school websites can be translated using the Google Translate feature.
- To support parents before, during, and after family-teacher conferences, the Multilingual Department has created [Guidance for Parent-Teacher Conference videos](#) in Amharic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese, and English.

Notices: An effective way to ensure that families who speak languages other than English can access services meaningfully is by providing notifications about the availability of language assistance services.

Translation of Vital Documents

SPS will provide written translations of important documents for each group of parents who have limited English proficiency, as long as that group makes up at least 5 percent of the total parent population or 1,000 people, whichever is fewer. Historically, the languages that meet this requirement



are Amharic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. For this plan, "vital documents" include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Registration, application, selection and enrollment;
- Academic standards and student performance;
- Safety, discipline, and conduct expectations;
- Special education and related services, Section 504 information, and McKinney-Vento services;
- Policies and procedures related to school attendance;
- Requests for parent permission in activities or programs;
- Opportunities for students or families to access school activities, programs and services;
- Student/parent/family handbook;
- The District's Language Access Plan and Program and related services or resources available;
- School closure information; and
- Any other documents notifying parents/families of their rights under applicable stat laws and/or containing information or forms related to consent or filing complaints under federal law, state law or District policy.

Written translations of important documents by machine or computer translation programs will not be used unless a certified translator reviews and edits them for languages where certification tests are available. For languages where certification tests do not exist, SPS will choose a qualified translator as determined by the District.

If translation for a document is not available or cannot be done, especially in emergencies, documents and information shared by SPS for parents and families will include a notice in the appropriate language(s). This notice will inform them that free translation and/or interpretation services are available, along with instructions on how to request a free translation or interpretation of the document.



Translation of Important Student Information

SPS will do its best to provide parents and families a translation of any document that has specific information about a student. This includes, but is not limited to, details about:

- Health
- Safety
- Legal
- Disciplinary matters
- Entitlement to public education
- Eligibility for special education services
- Eligibility for multilingual services
- Eligibility for advanced learning and highly capable services
- Placement in accelerated courses such as Advanced Placement or any other non-standards academic program

Families can always ask for a document to be translated, and SPS will provide this service for free. However, SPS might use a phone interpreter to help explain the document.

Interpretation Services for Families

When a parent or family asks for help with understanding school information, or when school staff or SPS officials think it's necessary to help communicate important details about a student's education or school activities, SPS will provide interpretation services. These services can be offered by a person who interprets in person or through electronic methods like phone calls or video chats.

- All school staff can and should use over-the-phone interpreters to talk with families.
- For interpretation during meetings about IEPs, enrollment, 504 plans, discipline, truancy, or graduation, school staff should contact the Multilingual Department or email languages@seattleschools.org.

Professional Development

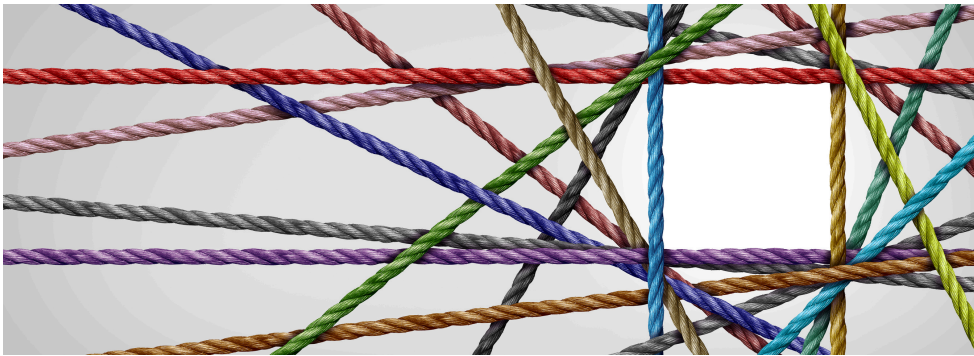


All employees and staff members in Seattle Public Schools play a crucial role in creating a safe and welcoming environment. SPS is dedicated to offering professional development on language access for all staff, especially those who regularly interact with the public. This includes school administrators, registrars, enrollment staff, certificated staff, and others as determined by the Language Access Coordinator. Staff will receive guidance on how to communicate effectively with parents and family members who have limited English proficiency. They will learn best practices for working with interpreters, how to access interpreter or translation services quickly, and information about language services available within the SPS. This training will also cover other important details necessary for putting the language access plan and program into action.

Appropriate district staff, as determined by the Language Access Liaison or Coordinator, will also get guidance on how School Board Policy 4218 relates to SPS's policy on effective communication with students, families, and community members who have disabilities.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All staff members play an important have a role in supporting families with limited English proficiency. This includes principals, assistant principals, teachers, office staff, counselors, social workers, family support workers, school nurses, district staff, and other personnel. Everyone has a part in supporting all families in our school community.



Evaluation of the Language Access Plan

The Multilingual Services Department will review the Language Access Plan and its components annually. The department will ask for feedback and opinions from these groups:

- Families through surveys
- Interpreters and translators through surveys
- Staff members through surveys

The Multilingual Services Department will keep a record and update a database of the interpreter and translation services requested.

Resources for Families

- [Seattle Public Schools Multilingual Department Website](#)
- [School Board Policy 4218](#) and [Superintendent Procedure 4218](#)
- [Parents' Rights Information Sheet: Interpretation and Translation Services](#)
- [Seattle Public Schools Translation and Interpretation Website](#)
- [Guidance for Parent-Teacher Conference Videos](#)

Resources for Staff

The following resources are available on the Translation and Interpretation page in [MySPS Multilingual Department Webpage](#) (login required):

- Superintendent Procedure 4218 – Language Access
- Directions to access over-the-phone interpreters (Linguistica & Lionbridge)
- Translation & Interpretation Resources for Central Office
- Translation & Interpretation Resources for School Buildings
- Language Access Poster to be displayed in all school buildings
- Tips for Using Interpreters, including the LEARN course: *Interpretation Considerations for Family Communication*





Contact

For more information, please reach out
to the Language Access Coordinator:

 Address	Seattle Public Schools, MS 31-676
 Email	languages@seattleschools.org
 Website	https://www.seattleschools.org/ departments/multilingual/
 Phone	206-743-3549



www.seattleschools.org/departments/multilingual/