

Frequently Asked Questions About ESL

Who participates in the ESL (English as a Second Language) program?

Students whose primary language is one other than English, or whose first learned language is one other than English, most often qualify for the ESL program. To qualify, the student must have a level of English language proficiency below that of a native speaker in several language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A student's level of English language proficiency is determined by the test results of the WIDA model screen, W-APT, or ACCESS for ELLs.

How does the school system know what my child's first language is?

Upon enrollment in any United States school system, the parent or guardian is asked to complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). The following questions concerning a student's language are asked:

Is your first learned language anything other than English?

What is the first language you learned to speak?

What language do you speak most often?

What language is most often spoken in your home?

The school considers the child to be a NOM (National Origin Minority) if their first language is one other than English. The child's home language survey is given to the ESL teacher who determines if further assessment of the child's English language proficiency is needed.

How does the ESL teacher assess my child's level of English proficiency?

There are various approved English language proficiency assessment tests. The tests are scored and the decision to place a student in the ESL program is made based upon the state's scoring standards. The WIDA Model Screener and the

W-APT are initial screening test options and are used when no other English language proficiency test scores are available for the student. The test determines the student's eligibility for ESL services. The ACCESS for ELLs is the annual test used to determine the amount of progress the student has made during the year. It also determines the student's current level of English language proficiency. All ESL teachers are trained annually to administer the tests to ensure valid test results.

What are the different levels of English language proficiency?

Level 1 Entering: the student knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support.

Level 2 Emerging: the student knows and uses some social English and general academic language with visual support.

Level 3 Developing: the student knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support.

Level 4 Expanding: the student knows and uses social English and some technical academic language.

Level 5 Bridging: the student knows and uses social and academic language working with grade level material.

Level 6 Reaching: the student knows and uses social and academic language at the highest level measured by this test.

How does the ESL teacher use the results of the Wida Model Screener, W-APT and ACCESS for ELLs?

The ESL teacher uses the test results to determine who is considered to be Limited English Proficient (LEP) and thus eligible to participate in the ESL program. The needs of the LEP student are analyzed and the best possible service for the student is determined. The ESL teacher uses the results of the ACCESS for ELLs to measure the amount of progress/growth the student has made since the previous annual testing. These scores are also used for determining which type of accommodations the LEP student qualifies for on the

state tests. The LEP student's classroom teacher receives a "snapshot" version of the child's proficiency levels which is used to establish any modifications the student may need in the regular classroom.

What kinds of services will my child receive as part of the ESL program?

The Little Falls Public School District strives to provide ESL services in the least restrictive manner possible. Therefore, a variety of services are offered to LEP students which are dependent upon their level of English language proficiency. Types of services currently available to our LEP students are listed below:

Pull-out

ESL students are pulled from the regular classroom by the ESL teacher to work on improving his/her English language skills. Focus of instruction varies based on student's individual needs and English proficiency levels in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Monitored Support

Any student who scores a combination of level 5 Bridging and level 6 Reaching on the ACCESS for ELLs subtests will not receive direct ESL services. The ESL teacher will consult with the regular classroom teacher concerning the student's academic progress. Should the need arise, consultative students may be brought back into direct ESL services to work on specific English language skills.

Multi-level ESL Elective Course

This course is available to students in grades 7 -8 whose language proficiency levels in reading and writing are below Level 5 Bridging. This course is offered as an elective. The teacher works with the students to improve the language skills they need to be successful in their academic courses.

What if I do NOT want my child to participate in the ESL program?

If you do not want your child to participate in the ESL program, then you may waive direct services for your child. A LEP student who has waived direct service does not qualify for classroom modifications and accommodations. If a parent does not wish for their child to receive direct ESL services, they may indicate this wish on the letter of eligibility. There is a box to mark and a place for the parent/guardian signature at the bottom of the letter. In this case, after the school receives this documentation, the school staff will consider the child waived from direct ESL services.

When is my child no longer eligible to participate in the ESL program?

In order to comply with state and federal requirements, every LEP student is reassessed annually with the appropriate level of the ACCESS for ELLs during the months of February and March. Any student who meets the state exit criteria will be exited from the ESL program and will no longer qualify for classroom accommodations. Parents are notified in writing of the child's exit from the ESL program. A copy of the exit form is placed in the student's cumulative folder and ESL folder.

The expected rate of transition, or the average amount of time Little Falls Public Schools expects a LEP student to be enrolled in the ESL program, is 3 -5 years. Please keep in mind that this is an average time. Some students may exit the program in less time while other students may remain in the program for a longer period of time to complete their acquisition of English. Please contact your child's ESL teacher if you have questions about his/her enrollment time in the ESL program.

What types of testing accommodations are available to LEP students?

Some LEP students may qualify for testing accommodations based on their most current ACCESS or W-APT scores. These accommodations may be used on local assessments as well as the NJSLA exams.

The accommodations available to LEP students are listed below:

- read test items aloud to student (math only)
- computer reads test aloud to student (math only)
- extended time to complete the test
- test in a separate room
- multiple sessions to complete the test
- use of a bilingual dictionary

What are the rights of ESL parents?

As a parent/guardian, you have certain rights regarding your child's participation in the ESL program:

A. You have the right to decline participation for your child in the ESL program. At any time you may request that your child opt out of the ESL program. It will be noted that your child should not receive direct ESL services. You may request that your student be placed back in the ESL program at any time.

What if there are additional questions or more information is needed?

If you have questions or would like more information about your child's participation in the Little Falls Township Public Schools ESL program, please contact your child's principal, ESL teacher, or the Director of Special Services.