



New York State Education Department
Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages



**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN NEW YORK STATE**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages at the New York State Education Department strives to provide students whose home languages are other than English access to equity and excellence in education. If your child's home language is other than English and he or she is learning, or on the way to learning English, your child is becoming bilingual. Congratulations! Bilingual children have unique assets and advantages and have great opportunities ahead. The New York State Education Department strongly values bilingualism and strives to provide the best setting for your child to develop his or her full language potential.

We invite you to learn about the educational programs available for newly enrolled students with home or primary languages other than English who need support in reaching English language proficiency. These students are called English Language Learners (ELLs) or Multilingual Learners (MLLs). We recognize that these students are not only developing English skills but becoming biliterate or, in some cases, multilingual children.

With more than 200 languages spoken within its borders, New York State is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse places in the world. Having more than one language is among our students' greatest assets. Thus, educational programs for ELLs across New York State aim to draw on the home or primary language as a resource to ensure that all students are able to excel academically.

In this guide, you will find information about how children are identified as ELLs, the kinds of programs available for ELLs, when students can exit ELL programs and services, and how you can obtain additional information, materials, and resources from local schools.

We believe parents and families play a fundamental role in determining which program best addresses the social, cultural, and academic needs of their children. We are excited to partner with you and look forward to working with you throughout this process.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and successful academic year!

Sincerely,



Angelica Infante-Green

*Associate Commissioner of Bilingual Education and World Languages
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)/MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS (MLLs)

How is my child identified as an English Language Learner (ELL)/Multilingual Learner (MLL)?

In New York State, all newly enrolled students and students re-enrolling after two years are required to complete a Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ). The HLQ must be conducted at the time of enrollment.

Through this survey, along with an informal interview, a qualified teacher or other professional staff member will get to know what languages are used in the home. If the survey and the interview indicate that a language other than English is used in the home, your child must take an English language proficiency test called the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL).

The NYSITELL results are then used to assess your child's English language level (Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding). If your child scores at Entering (Beginning), Emerging (Low Intermediate), Transitioning (Intermediate), or Expanding (Advanced), he or she is identified as an ELL. ELLs are entitled to receive Bilingual Education (BE) or English as a New Language (ENL) services. If a student scores at the Commanding (Proficient) level he or she is not identified as an ELL.

The NYSITELL results help teachers better prepare and serve their students. Teachers use this information to identify a student's English language strengths and needs in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These results also guide the school in programming the minimum number of minutes of English as a New Language (ENL) instruction per week for the student.

The process of identification must be conducted prior to the beginning of the school year or no later than within the first ten days of a student's enrollment.

Level	Description of English Language Proficiency Level
Entering (Beginning)	A student at the Entering level has great dependence on supports and structures to advance academic language skills and has not yet met the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings).
Emerging (Low Intermediate)	A student at the Emerging level has some dependence on supports and structures to advance academic language skills and has not yet met the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings).
Transitioning (Intermediate)	A student at the Transitioning level shows some independence in advancing academic language skills, but has yet to meet the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings).
Expanding (Advanced)	A student at the Expanding level shows great independence in advancing academic language skills and is approaching the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings).
Commanding (Proficient)	A student at the Commanding level has met the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate English language proficiency in a variety of academic contexts (settings). He or she is not an ELL.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ELLs/MLLs (continued)

Programs in Focus

What are the programs available for English Language Learners?

Currently, New York State offers two approved program models for ELLs in state school districts:

1. Bilingual Education
 - The Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Program
 - The One or Two-Way Dual Language Program (OWDL/TWDL)
2. English as a New Language (ENL) Program (formerly known as English as a Second Language or ESL)

Both program models support the academic achievement of ELLs, but the instructional time spent in the home or primary language and in English differs in each model. Families may choose to have their children participate in a Transitional Bilingual Education, a One or Two-Way Dual Language, or an English as a New Language program. If these programs are not available at the local school, you may request a transfer to a school that offers your program of choice. ELLs in Transitional Bilingual Education or One or Two-Way Dual Language programs are mandated to receive the same amount of specific units of ENL instruction as students in the ENL model. At a minimum, ELLs are mandated to receive ENL instruction. For more information, go to:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/Nowithdrawaloptionmemo.pdf>

Bilingual Education

Transitional Bilingual Education

Transitional Bilingual Education Programs offer students of the same home/primary language the opportunity to learn to speak, understand, read, and write in English while continuing to learn academic content in their home/primary language. The students' home/primary language is used to help them progress academically in all content areas while they acquire English. The goal of a TBE Program is to provide students with the opportunity to transition to a monolingual English classroom setting without additional supports once they reach proficiency. Even though the amount of English instruction students receive will increase over time, in a TBE program, there will always be home/primary language instruction and supports, allowing students the opportunity to develop bilingually.

One or Two-Way Dual Language Programs

These programs are designed to help native and nonnative English speakers achieve bilingualism (the ability to speak fluently in two languages), biliteracy (the ability to read and write in two languages), cross-cultural competence, and academic proficiency equal to that of students in non-ELL programs.

The One-Way Dual Language Program is primarily composed of students who come from the same home/primary language and/or background. The teacher provides instruction in both English and the home/target* language.

The Two-Way Dual Language Program includes both native English speakers and ELLs. The teacher or teachers provide instruction in both English and the home/primary language. In the majority of Dual Language Programs, the students receive half of their instruction in their home/primary language and the remainder of their instruction in the target language. Depending upon the model, the percentages of English and home/target language instruction will vary. For example, in a 90%-10% model, a greater percentage of the instruction is in the target language other than English and increases over time until reaching 50%-50%. The goal of these programs is for students to develop literacy and proficiency in English and in the home/target language.

* *The target language is the second language that is being acquired/learned.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs) (continued)

Will my child learn English if he or she is using the home language that often?

A common concern is that students will be confused when learning in two languages. Research conducted for over 30 years has repeatedly demonstrated that there is no language confusion. In fact, using a student's home/primary language is the most effective way for him or her to develop English. In addition, bilingual learners develop a flexible brain and a range of cognitive skills that help them learn in very powerful ways. In One or Two-Way Dual Language Programs, the language of instruction is separated, meaning students have certain times or days for a particular language. When parents visit the programs, they see that this setting is not confusing but actually conducive to the development of bilingualism in students. Research has shown that by the age of ten, children in One or Two-Way Dual Language Programs can perform on par with or above English monolingual speakers.

What kind of lessons and activities should I expect to see in a Bilingual Program?

Students receive part of their instruction in English and part in the home/primary language, but the curriculum is the same as in the non-bilingual classes. Students develop literacy and content knowledge in math, science, language arts, and social studies in both languages depending on the program model. A bilingual and biliterate child is able to listen, speak, read, and write in both English and the home/primary language. Skills in one language transfer to the second language. When a student has strong literacy skills in the home/primary language, those skills transfer to the second language.

English as a New Language Programs

Instruction in this program, formerly known as English as a Second Language (ESL), emphasizes English language acquisition. In an ENL program, language arts and content-area instruction are taught in English using specific ENL instructional strategies. Some content area classes are Integrated ENL classes. Students receive core content area and English language development instruction, including the use of the home/primary language as support and appropriate ELL instructional supports to enrich comprehension. Integrated ENL classes are taught by a teacher dually certified in the content area and ENL or are co-taught by a certified content area teacher and a certified ENL teacher. In a Stand-alone ENL class, students receive English language development instruction taught by a NYS-certified teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in order to acquire the English language needed for success in core content areas. This program typically serves ELL students from many different home/primary language backgrounds whose only common language is English and therefore cannot participate in a bilingual program.

What are the differences among these programs?

Dual Language Programs use instruction in both languages and aim to develop biliteracy and bilingualism. The primary goals of Transitional Bilingual Education are to ensure mastery of grade-appropriate academic skills and knowledge and facilitate the process of learning English by using the home/primary language. In ENL classrooms and models, instruction is primarily in English and home/primary language supports are offered. Please see the chart on the following page, which compares the different program models.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs) (continued)

Dual Language Programs	
Languages used	Generally 50% English and 50% home or target language or 90% home or target language and 10% English, which increases until reaching 50%-50%. (Percentage varies depending upon the program model.)
Goals	Biliteracy and bilingualism in English and the home/target language

Transitional Bilingual Education Programs	
Languages used	Home/primary language use decreases as English use increases
Goals	Use home/primary language to continue to learn content while learning English

English as a New Language Program	
Languages used	Primarily English (home/primary language support is offered to facilitate English acquisition)
Goals	To support ELLs as they progress toward English proficiency

How do I learn more about programs for my child?

In New York State, schools are required to hold orientations for families of newly enrolled ELLs to inform parents and guardians about the different ELL programs available in their schools or district. At the orientation, you will receive information and materials about the curriculum and the standards, as well as materials in your home/primary language about ELL programs, and you will be able to ask questions about ELL services, with assistance from an interpreter, if needed. At the end of the orientation, you will fill out an ELL Parent Orientation Checklist to confirm that you have the information needed to make decisions for your child. In addition, you will also receive an ELL Student Placement form that will allow you to make a final decision regarding the services that your child will receive. This information will be made available in your home/primary language.

When can my child exit from ELL programs?

There are four ways ELLs can exit ELL status:

Grades K-12	Scoring at the Commanding/Proficient level on the NYSESLAT
Grades 3-8	Scoring at the Expanding/Advanced level on the NYSESLAT and 3 or above on the NYS English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in the same year
Grades 9-12	Scoring at the Expanding/Advanced level on the NYSESLAT and 65 or above on the Regents Exam in English in the same year
ELLs with Disabilities	An alternative method of assessment will be used to determine language proficiency (pending approval)

Once an ELL has exited ELL status, he or she becomes a former ELL. Former ELLs are entitled to receive two years of former ELL support services.

MYTHS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS (ELLs/MLLs)

Myth 1: Most ELLs are born outside of the United States (US).

There are more than 215,000 English Language Learners (ELLs) ages 5 to 18 attending school in New York State. Of those, 61.5% were born in the US, according to the 2013-2014 NYS Information Repository System (SIRS).

Myth 2: In the past, immigrants succeeded without English as a New Language (ENL) and bilingual classes.

Being bilingual is of great value, as times have changed. Students face a job market that requires greater educational accomplishments than ever before. NYS's adoption of the Common Core ELA standards requires higher level language skills so that graduates will be competitive in our global economy. Since ELLs come with knowledge in their home/primary language, educators must build upon that prior knowledge to further develop ELLs' academic knowledge and skills and prepare them for college and career readiness.

Myth 3: Once ELLs can converse socially in English, they are then capable of succeeding academically.

While ELLs may acquire social language within three years, it may take up to seven years for an ELL to achieve academic proficiency in English. Levels of knowledge and literacy in the home/primary language impact the rate in which students can perform academically in English.

Myth 4: Passing an English proficiency test such as the NYS Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) or the NYS English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) means that the student is proficient enough in English to succeed in school.

English proficient students may still need support and assistance and/or instructional supports in the classroom. Part 154 of the Commissioner's Regulations requires school districts to provide students with Former ELL services for two years after exiting ELL status. In addition, they may continue to receive ELL test accommodations for the same two years after they are no longer ELLs.

Myth 5: To succeed in school, ELLs must assimilate culturally, as quickly as possible.

Rather than "give up to gain," ELLs need to connect what is going on in their classrooms to their own cultural experiences so that they can maintain their identity while learning the new culture. As for all students, teachers must build on students' prior knowledge. Acknowledging the varying cultural experiences in a classroom increases the quality of education for all students.

Myth 6: If children are exposed to English and their primary language at home, it leads to language disorders and delays.

No, it does not lead to language disorders and delays. It is very important that parents speak the language in which they are most fluent to their children. The human brain has an extensive capacity to learn multiple languages simultaneously. In fact, acquiring two languages at an early age strengthens cognitive abilities. Being bilingual also increases academic and economic advantages in our global economy.

MYTHS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS (ELLs/MLLs) (continued)

Myth 7: Students should be discouraged from using their home/primary language in school.

Schools in which students are encouraged to use their home/primary language support student learning by increasing student participation. This practice also positively impacts a student's self-esteem.

Myth 8: English immersion results in faster English language acquisition.

Instruction in a student's home/primary language facilitates the acquisition of English. Children need a strong, fluent foundation in their first language in order to succeed in English. Dual language programs provide an effective instructional approach that supports second language acquisition and content area knowledge, and maintains the child's home/primary language.

Myth 9: ELLs should be taught to read in English from the beginning.

Research shows that reading skills transfer from one language to another. Students who first learn to read in their home/primary language will be successful readers in English.

Adapted from: *Debunking the Myths of English Language Learners*, New York State United Teachers Research and Educational Services, 2015.



DID YOU KNOW?

FACTS ABOUT BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

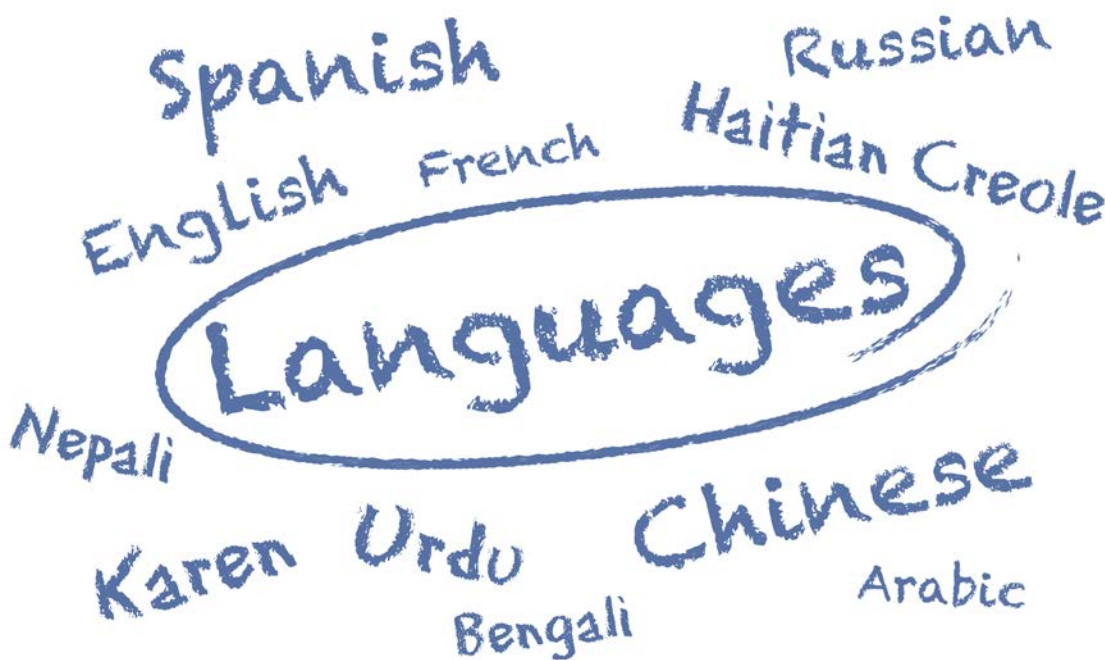
The following are important research-based facts on bilingualism and bilingual education. There are many cognitive, social, and professional benefits of bilingualism:

- Evidence from a number of studies suggests that bilingualism improves brain function across many areas in charge of planning, solving problems, and performing a series of mentally demanding tasks.
- Bilingual students have been shown to have a greater ability to monitor the environment and stay focused.
- Bilingual education takes into account a range of cultural practices and fosters social development across students.
- Students in bilingual programs have a strong sense of identity and feel for their language; thus their culture is represented and respected.
- Bilingualism is a professional asset. In an increasingly global society, the ability to speak and write in several languages is highly valued in the job market.
- Reading to your child in your home/primary language is a wonderful and effective literacy practice that has significant positive impact on his or her academic development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics* has recently endorsed a social policy report on multilingual children that contains the latest synthesis of research, based on extensive evidence from the fields of medicine, psychology, education, and linguistics. The report concludes that multilingualism is an advantage to be nurtured and not a risk factor to be discouraged in a child's life. For more information see:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/133/5/e1481.full>

* Published online April 28, 2014. *Pediatrics* Vol. 133, No. 5, May 1, 2014.



DID YOU KNOW? FACTS ABOUT BILINGUALISM AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION (continued)

Myth 1: My child will be confused by two languages.

- Learning two or more languages simultaneously does not confuse children. Children raised in a place where both languages are valued will experience cognitive, social, and potentially economic benefits.
- Children exposed to more than one language have greater tissue density in the areas of the brain related to language, memory, and attention.
- Multilingual children also have greater executive control (which helps with planning, memorization, dealing with new or novel situations, and resisting temptation) and better early literacy skills.

Myth 2: Bilingual children who mix words have weak language skills.

- Bilingual children who “mix languages” are not deficient, but are simply using all of their linguistic resources. Language development is a dynamic process that takes into account both languages. The most powerful resource ELLs have is their home/primary language, and they are likely to draw on it as they acquire English.

Myth 3: My child will not learn English if he or she is consistently exposed to another language.

- Research has shown that the best way to develop a second language is through the use of the first. Students fare much better in bilingual programs as they become biliterate and receive the support they need from well-equipped teachers and educators to succeed in both languages.

Myth 4: My child will learn English faster if he or she is only exposed to English.

- Research has shown that students who are taught in the home/primary language learn English faster. The knowledge gained in the home/primary language transfers to the other language. In fact, learning to read in the first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English! (Report of the [National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read, 2006.](#))

There are multiple advantages to bilingualism, and as the *New York Times* stated, “being bilingual makes people smarter.” ([Why Bilinguals are Smarter, NYT, 2012](#))

On pages 2-4, you will find more in-depth information about each of the program models that New York State provides for ELLs.

PARTICIPATING IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

How can we as parents/guardians support our children?

- Read to your child in his or her home/primary language and/or English. Research shows that reading to your child in your home/primary language will help support English literacy skills.
- Tell stories to your child in your home/primary language. Talk about your own childhood or things you remember from the past.
- Show your child that you value your home/primary language. Speak to him or her in that language even if he or she responds in English.
- Get a library card for your child, go to the library, and borrow books in English or in your home/primary language, if available.
- Be sure to attend parent-teacher conferences scheduled by your school.
- Schedule an individual meeting with your child's teacher to learn about specific ways that you can help your child succeed.
- Schedule time every day for your child to do homework and, if possible, provide a quiet place, free from distractions, where he or she can work.
- Plan family outings to museums. Guides at the museum can help you navigate an exhibit with your child. In addition, museums often offer inexpensive and/or free enrichment classes after school or on weekends.
- In the United States, parents are an integral part of the education system. Ask your child's teacher how you can participate.
- Know your rights. Please see the [Parents' Bill of Rights for New York State's English Language Learners](#).



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS OF ELLs

Colorín Colorado

A bilingual website for families and educators of English Language Learners which is a project in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). It includes information about teaching English Language Learners.
<http://www.colorincolorado.org/>

Engage NY

EngageNY.org is developed and maintained by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to support the implementation of key aspects of the New York State Board of Regents Reform Agenda. EngageNY.org is dedicated to providing educators across New York State with real-time, professional learning tools and resources to support educators in reaching the State's vision for a college and career ready education for all students.
<https://www.engageny.org/>

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education: *If Your Child Learns in Two Languages* (booklet)

http://ncela.us/files/uploads/9/IfYourChildLearnsInTwoLangs_English.pdf

National PTA: Parents' Guide to Student Success

<http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>

NYC DOE: ELL Family Resources

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/FamilyResources/Activities+For+Parents.htm>

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/FamilyResources/default.htm>

New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/>

New York Immigration Coalition Directory of Service Providers

http://www.thenycic.org/sites/default/files/Low_Cost_Immigration_Service_Providers_Final_Draft_6.15.15_0.pdf

PBS Kids

<http://pbskids.org/>

Reading Rockets: English Language Learners

<http://www.readingrockets.org/reading-topics/english-language-learners>

Teachers First: Ideas and Resources for Parents of ESL/ELL Students

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/par-esl.cfm>

The Teaching of Language Arts to Limited English Proficient/ English Language Learners: Learning Standards for Native Language Arts

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/resource/NLA.html>

US Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/>

USDOE Federal Student Aid Portal

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/resources/parents>

USDOE Helping My Child Succeed: Toolkit for Hispanic Families (English and Spanish)

<http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/2006toolkit/index.html>

USDOE Helping Your Child Series (English and Spanish)

<http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html>

**Parents with information are the best
advocates for their children.**

For questions and concerns about ELL services please contact:

nysparenthotline@nyu.edu

(800) 469-8224



For questions, please visit:

Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL)

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/>

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