

### *Washington values bilingualism*

Your efforts to help your children learn their first language well are important. Continue speaking, telling and reading stories, listening to music, and learning new things with your children in your language.

### *What are the benefits of learning two languages?*

Knowing more than one language is a skill to be valued and encouraged. Studies have shown that when children continue to learn their native language, this does not interfere with learning English – it makes the process easier!

Some of the benefits of bilingualism are:

- **Intellectual:** The best way to ensure academic success and intellectual development is for parents and children to use the language they know best with each other. Also, bilingual children have greater mental flexibility and use those skills to their advantage in math.
- **Educational:** Students who learn English and continue to develop their native language do better in school than those who learn English at the expense of their first language. It is much easier to learn to read in a language you already know. Once you can read in one language, it is easier to learn to read in another.
- **Personal:** A child's first language is critical to his or her identity. Continuing to develop this language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage.
- **Social:** When the native language is maintained, important links to family and other community members are preserved and enhanced.
- **Economic:** The demand for bilingual employees throughout the world is increasing. The ability to speak, read, and write two or more languages is a great advantage in the job market.

Sources:

If Your Child Learns in Two Languages by Nancy Zelasko and Beth Antunez (U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, August 2000)

### *Did you know...*

- Nine percent of students in Washington State participate in programs to learn English. That is 98,472 students, representing 208 languages.
- Spanish was the primary language spoken by 67 percent of students learning English. Nineteen percent spoke Russian, Vietnamese, Somali, Ukrainian, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, or Arabic.
- Most students served by the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program are enrolled in elementary school (53 percent for the 2010-2011 school year).
- Even if students appear to be fluent, they may still need support in developing the language skills they need to be successful in school. Research has demonstrated that achievement of "academic" English, the level needed to participate in instruction in English without help, takes four to seven years to develop.
- The state calculates Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for districts. AMAO 1 measures the annual increase in the number or percentage of children making progress in learning English. AMAO 2 measures the number or percentage of children attaining English proficiency. AMAO 3 measures the number or percentage of students learning English who reach academic standards in reading and math based on the state's assessments.

Ask your school about your district's results or view them online at <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/WLPTAmao.aspx>.

**Learn more: [www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual](http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual)**



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## *Learning English in Washington schools: What parents should know*

### *Mission Statement*

English Language Learners (ELLs) will meet state standards and develop English language proficiency in an environment where language and cultural assets are recognized as valuable resources to learning.

Bilingual Education Office  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

*Are districts required to help students learn English?*

School districts must ensure that students with limited English proficiency are able to participate meaningfully in school and are not denied access to equal educational opportunities. Since knowing and using English well is necessary for success in school, it is important that students who need additional help learning English get the help they need.

Language acquisition programs are required to have:

- Sound educational theory
- Effective implementation
- Program evaluation and modification

Casteñeda v. Pickard, 648 F. 2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981)

*How do students qualify for a district's English language development program?*

When students enroll in school, parents are asked “Did your child first speak a language other than English?” If the answer is “yes”, the student takes the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA) Placement Test. Students who score at Levels 1 (beginning), 2 (intermediate), or 3 (advanced) on the Placement Test qualify for additional help to improve their English.

*How long do students receive services through the district's English language development program?*

Students continue in the program as long as they need help learning English. The WELPA Annual Test is given to measure students’ growth in English language knowledge and skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A score at Levels 1, 2, or 3 on the WELPA determines that the student will continue in

program. Students successfully transition from the program when they meet the exit criteria on the WELPA.

Photo courtesy of Mercer Island School District

*What are the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program and Title III?*

The Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program is funded by the state of Washington, and the Title III program is funded by the federal government. The goal of both is for students to develop English language proficiency while developing academics at grade level.

Funding for the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program and Title III may pay for things like teacher salaries, professional development and training for teachers, materials to help students learn English, parent involvement and literacy activities, instruction outside of the typical school day, and translation and interpretation specific to the program.

*What is a Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program?*

A Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program:

- Uses two languages, one of which is English, as a means of instruction to build upon and expand language skills to enable a student to achieve competency in English;
- Teaches concepts and knowledge in the primary language of a student, while the student also acquires English language skills.
- Tests students in the subject matter in English.

Research has shown that students learning English in a bilingual instruction program tend to be more academically successful in the long term than those in English-only programs.

Districts that do not have the capacity to provide bilingual instruction can help students learn English through Sheltered Instruction. Sheltered Instruction is an approach for teaching in strategic ways that make academic concepts comprehensible while promoting students’ English language development.

*Do parents have the right to decline services?*

Yes, parents can choose to remove their children from the English language development program. However, parents should first discuss this decision with an administrator who can explain the benefits of participation in the program. Parents should also ask about the programs and methods of instruction available at the district. Parents have the right to choose another program or method of instruction, if available.

*Why should parents be involved in their children's education?*

Family involvement is a key factor in a student’s improved academic performance.

When families are involved, research shows students benefit with:

- Higher Grade Point Averages
- Enrollment in more challenging classes
- Better attendance
- Improved behavior
- Better social skills

*How can parents be involved in a district's English language development program?*

Districts are required to inform parents how they can be active participants in assisting their children to learn English, to achieve high levels in core academic subjects, and to meet the same academic standards that all students are expected to meet.

Districts must ask for parent input into the program or method of instruction used in the English language development program and into the district’s Title III plan.

Some districts use Title III or Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program funding to provide training to parents in areas such as computer usage, leadership, English as a second language, homework help, or learning activities to do at home.

*How can a parent who does not speak English be involved?*

Ask the district to provide an interpreter at school meetings and to provide important written documents in a language you can understand. School districts have the responsibility to communicate with parents who have limited English skills.

*Attend district meetings and respond to requests for suggestions. Your ideas will improve services to your children and your family!*

