

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: IOD-RA
Responsible Office: Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Instruction and Program Development

Education of English Language Learners

A. PURPOSE

To reaffirm the education of English language learners as a high priority for MCPS

To ensure compliance with federal and state mandates regarding the education of English language learners

B. ISSUE

Success for Every Student is based on the premise that quality education is a fundamental right of every child. Language should not be a barrier that impedes English language learners in their effort to secure equal educational opportunities in the Montgomery County Public Schools. English language learners have become an increasingly diverse group of students, representing many countries and languages, coming from all socioeconomic levels, and having varied educational and experiential backgrounds. There must be special instructional and support programs to meet the challenges faced by these students, including services such as counseling, parent outreach, and bilingual assessments that will help eliminate barriers that might prevent students from participating fully in educational programs. Instruction should enable students to learn English as quickly as possible while at the same time ensuring that they do not fall behind their grade-level peers in content areas.

C. POSITION

1. It is the intent of the Board of Education of the Montgomery County Public Schools to:
 - a) Hold English language learners to the same high expectations of learning established for all students

- b) Assure that English language learners develop full proficiencies in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consistent with expectations for all students
- c) Assure that English language learners reach challenging content and performance standards in all content areas, including reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, the fine arts, health, and physical education, consistent with those for all students
- d) Provide instruction to English language learners that builds on their previous education and cognitive abilities and that reflects their English language proficiency levels
- e) Evaluate English language learners with appropriate and valid assessments that are aligned with state and local standards and that take into account the language acquisition stages and cultural backgrounds of the students
- f) Recognize that the academic success of English language learners is a responsibility shared by the students, all educators, the family, and the community

2. Definitions

- a) *ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages* is a specialized English language instructional program for non-native speakers of English that emphasizes the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- b) *English Language Learners (ELL)* is the term preferred by professionals in the field of second language teaching to describe students whose native language is not English and who have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individuals the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English.
- c) *Transition students* are those who have been exited from the ESOL program for less than one year.
- d) *Limited English Proficient (LEP)* is the official term found in federal and state legislation to describe English language learners.

3. Curriculum

The ESOL curriculum:

- a) Is research based
- b) Incorporates the principles and guidelines set forth in the *ESL Standards for Students PreK-12*
- c) Is based on age-appropriate levels of English language proficiency
- d) Is aligned with the MCPS English/Reading/Language Arts curriculum
- e) Is reflective of the many cultural and linguistic backgrounds represented by ELL students
- f) Is taught using the content, strategies, and thinking processes that students encounter as they pursue an education in MCPS

4. Program

- a) Each school, in collaboration with the Office of Instruction and Program Development and the Office of School Performance, will provide an appropriate, clearly defined and articulated program to respond to the range of needs of English language learners.
- b) Performance of transition students will be monitored by ESOL staff and appropriate accommodations will be provided for a period of one year.
- c) Staff development is an integral component of a quality program. Staff development opportunities will be offered to all staff.

5. Identification and Completion

- a) An English language proficiency assessment will be administered by qualified and trained assessors to all students whose native or primary language is not English at the time they initially enroll in MCPS to identify English language learners and determine their level of English proficiency.

- b) English language learners will be considered English proficient and designated as “transition” students upon meeting the criteria established by Maryland State Guidelines.
- c) Identification and program completion procedures will be evaluated periodically and revised as necessary.

6. ESOL Services

- a) Schools will employ appropriate, relevant, and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure that parents of English language learners are informed about and become involved in their children’s education.
- b) MCPS will provide ESOL counseling to assist English language learners in their new school and community environment.
- c) MCPS will provide assessments that minimize cultural and linguistic biases for English language learners who are suspected of having a disability.

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

- 1. Services of the ESOL program will be offered to all English language learners and will be designed to accommodate diversity in student backgrounds and levels of English language proficiency.
- 2. The expectation for success for students receiving services of the ESOL program will be the same as for all students in MCPS.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent will:

- 1. Issue administrative procedures for the development, maintenance, and evaluation of appropriate programs for English language learners in Montgomery County Public Schools
- 2. Allocate staff and material resources annually, based on documented needs and within existing budgetary constraints
- 3. Apply for appropriate federal financial assistance, where available, to implement this policy

4. Work collaboratively with other county agencies and community organizations to access resources and help meet the needs of English language learners and their families.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

1. Annually report to the Board of Education the number of English language learners being served, by program and by native language spoken, within the total Montgomery County Public Schools.
2. Annually report to the Board of Education the results of English language learners' academic progress with the same measures used by all students, including comparisons with other Montgomery County students.
3. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Policy History: Resolution No. 77-80, January 21, 1980, amended by Resolution No. 333-86, June 12, 1986; amended by Resolution No. 599-99, October 14, 1999; updated office titles June 1, 2000.