

Yours, Mine, Ours: English Language Learners (ELLs) in New York State



**As parents, educators, and community members,
we partner to ensure that our children
and youth are successful in school.**



Introduction

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) is very pleased to have partnered with the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. (NYS PTA) in developing this guide for parents of English language learners (ELL). This partnership between our two organizations reflects the positive relationship that should exist between home and school. We can say from experience, that when it comes to helping students do well in school, parents' support makes a big difference.

Teachers know that it takes all of us — parents and educators — working together to help students do well. We cannot, and should not, do it alone. You know your children best. And no one is better prepared to help us, help them, than you are. It is only when parents, who understand their child, and teachers, who have knowledge of classroom instruction, work together, that children will reach their fullest potential.

When parents and educators work together, the best interests of the child are met. We hope that this guidebook will provide you with the information you need to help your child succeed in school. Know your rights as a parent so you can be a strong advocate for your child's future.



Maria Fletcher

Dr. Maria Fletcher, President
New York State Congress of
Parents and Teachers, Inc.



Richard C. Iannuzzi

Richard C. Iannuzzi,
President, NYSUT

What help is available in school if my child speaks little or no English?

- When you register your child in school, you will need to fill out a home language questionnaire.
- If your answers show that your child or family speaks a language other than English in your home, someone from the school district will interview your child.
- If the questionnaire and interview show that your child might not be proficient in English, then the school will administer the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R) to your child.
- The LAB-R results will help the school district determine if your child needs to receive additional support in learning English. This help can include instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) and it may also include instruction in a bilingual education program.
- The school will inform you within 30 days after your child has taken the LAB-R, if your child will need additional help in learning English.
- Your school district should provide an orientation session on the state standards, assessments, school expectations and general program requirements for the bilingual education program or English as a Second Language program.

If my child is eligible for services, what amount of ESL services is my child entitled to receive?

- If your child scores at the Beginning or Intermediate level on the LAB-R assessment, your child should be scheduled for two instructional units per week of ESL instruction at the elementary or middle school level. In grades 9-12, students scoring at the Beginning level should receive three instructional units of ESL per week. An instructional unit is 180 minutes per week.
- If your child scores at the Advanced level on the LAB-R assessment, your child should be scheduled for one unit of instruction per day of ESL and one instructional unit of English Language Arts instruction.

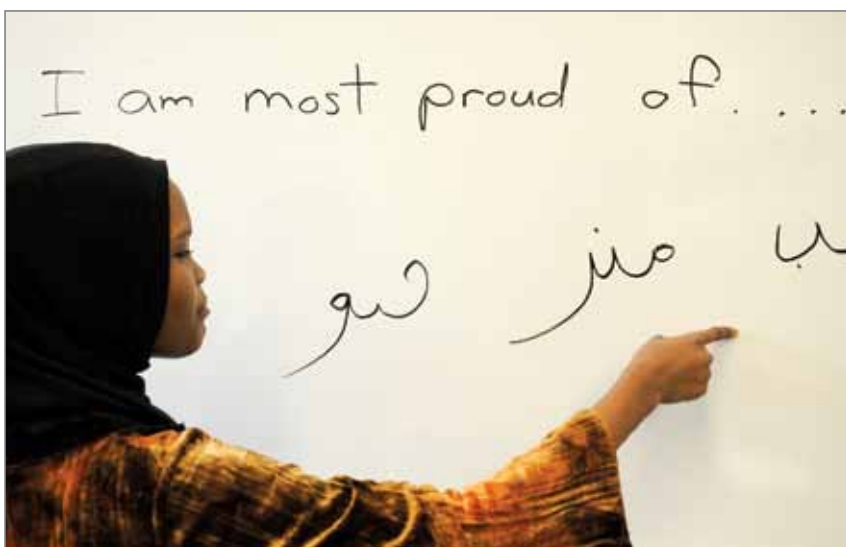
Level of English Proficiency	Number of Units	Total Time/Week
Beginning/Intermediate	2*	6 hours
Advanced	1	3 hours
* for grades 9-12		

As a parent, may I refuse ESL services for my child?

Under federal and state regulations, students that do not test English proficient are required to receive ESL services. ESL services are not optional. However, if a bilingual program is available in your school, you have the option to indicate whether you would like to place your child in the bilingual program.

What are ESL instructional services?

- English as a Second Language instruction is an additional service to help your child succeed in school and to provide “meaningful access” to the curriculum. ESL teachers help children develop English language skills, cultural awareness and learning strategies. ESL instruction must be provided by a New York state-certified English as a Second Language teacher.
- Depending on your child’s school, ESL instruction may be organized in one of the following three formats. Your child might ...
 - be in a class with other students who are also English Language Learners.
 - be pulled out of his/her grade-level classroom for small group and/or individualized instruction.
 - receive in-class support from a bilingual classroom teacher.



What are the bilingual services that my child may be eligible to receive?

- In a bilingual instructional program, English language learners receive:
 - content area instruction provided in the student's native language,
 - language arts instruction provided in the student's native language, and
 - specialized instruction to support the acquisition of English as a Second Language.

When are schools required to provide bilingual services?

According to Part 154 of the Commissioner's Regulations, schools outside of New York City (NYC) are required to provide a bilingual instructional program in schools with 20 or more students who speak the same language, and who are at the same grade level.

NYC's *Aspira Consent Decree* requires that each school provide a bilingual instructional program when the school meets the following criteria:

Grades K-8

15 or more students

- who speak same language, and
- who are in 2 adjacent grades

Grades 9-12

20 or more students

- who speak same language, and
- who are in same grade level

What testing accommodations is my child entitled to receive as an English language learner?

Based on your child's needs, your child may receive one or more of the following testing accommodations for NYS assessments in the content areas (Math, Science, Social Studies):

- Use of bilingual dictionaries and/or glossaries when taking state content tests. Bilingual dictionaries and glossaries may provide only direct one to one translations of words. Bilingual dictionaries and/or glossaries that provide definitions or explanations are not permitted.

- Extended time for taking the assessments.
- A separate location for individual or small group administration of the assessments.
- Translated native language editions of the content area assessments, when available. Both native language editions AND the English editions should be provided to your child.
- Oral translations of the content area assessments, when there is no translated edition available in your child's native language.
- Responses may be written in your child's native language.
- Your child is also eligible to receive a third reading of the listening part of the NYS English Language Arts assessments and the NYS Regents Comprehensive Examination in English.



What other instructional support services are available for my child?

- Your child may have the opportunity to receive academic support services, such as guidance and counseling, in your child’s primary language, whenever possible.
- Your child must have equal access to the same non-academic programs and extracurricular activities available to all other students.
- Your child may be eligible to receive special education services, Title I services, vocational education, advanced and gifted classes, when available, in addition to ESL and/or native language instruction.
- Check with your school district to learn what other services may be available for your child including summer school, after school programming, and tutoring.



How will I be informed of my child’s school performance?

Most schools send home periodic progress reports during the school year. Some school districts may post these reports on-line. Check with your school. The reports may be sent home in the parent’s native language, whenever feasible. If it is not possible to send the report home in the family’s native language, parents should request to have the information explained to them in their native language.

Staff at your child’s school district should meet with you at least twice a year, to help you understand the goals of your child’s program and how they might help your child. The school may have designated days for to meet with your child’s teacher.

If your child is enrolled in an ESL and/or bilingual program, your child is required to take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) annually to determine progress in English. Each year that your child takes the NYSESLAT, you should be provided with the results of your child's test. You can request to have the results explained to you in your language. If your child scores as English proficient on the NYSESLAT exam, your child will transition out of the ESL and/or bilingual instructional program.

What services are available when my child is no longer eligible for ESL or bilingual services?

Once your child is determined to be English proficient, your child should be provided with transitional language support services including ESL for the first year after achieving English proficiency. The transitional support services may be continued for up to two years after your child is determined to be English proficient.

Your child's school district is also required to monitor your child's progress for two years after achieving English proficiency.

Some of these services your child could receive include:

- Reading/Academic Intervention Services (AIS)
- Content area support
- ESL instruction
- Counseling services

In addition, students who are no longer eligible for an ESL or bilingual program are entitled to receive test accommodations for up to two years after they have tested proficient on the NYSESLAT assessment.

It is important that you continue to speak and read to your child in your native language. Providing a strong foundation in your child's native language will assist your child in acquiring English and will also contribute to your child's overall success in school.

Children are able to connect what they already know in their native language with the new information they are learning. Be sure to talk to your child's teacher(s) and other school personnel, such as school counselors, to learn about other resources available in your community. In addition there are resources for parents available on the Internet including:

Colorín Colorado:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/families>

American Federation of Teachers (AFT):

<http://www.aft.org/yourwork/teachers/reports/parents.cfm>

National Education Association (NEA):

<http://www.nea.org/parents/>

Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Centers (BETAC):

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/k12_12162.htm



For further information contact:
Melanie Pores, Assistant in Educational Services at NYSUT
800-342-9810, ext. 6057, or *mpores@nysutmail.org*

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NYSUT
800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455
518-213-6000 • 800-342-9810
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