

DEVELOPING AN



E L L

English
Language
Learning

PROGRAM



*A guide for
novice school districts*

All school districts in Missouri are required to provide equal educational opportunities to students regardless of race, national origin, sex, color or disabilities. Highly qualified teachers are needed in schools to implement programs ensuring that all children meet Missouri's academic content and achievement standards. To have access to school programs, English Language Learners (ELLs) – including immigrant children and youth, refugees, migrants, and undocumented students – must receive instruction that increases their English proficiency and core academic content knowledge. Suitable instruction involves the application of rigorous, systemic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities and programs. This is important to the success of the student. All ELLs must be served in the ESOL program. There must not be a waiting list of ELLs in a district. ELLs cannot be retained solely because of language barriers. Grades represent what a student understands about the subject matter after appropriate modifications and interventions have been documented, not the level of English language proficiency. ELL services must be provided to identified students regardless of whether the services are funded by state or federal government.

Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education



PROGRAM STEPS

► WHERE TO BEGIN

All school districts in Missouri are required to have a plan or a policy to systematically identify ELLs. Districts must also have an assessment tool (W-APT, the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test) to measure the language ability of these students in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

► HOW TO IDENTIFY ELL STUDENTS

School districts must establish procedures to identify ELLs. Procedures must include a language survey or at least two questions on the school enrollment form. Required questions on the enrollment form are:

1. Do you use a language other than English?
2. Is a language other than English used in your home?

► DOES A YES MEAN AN ELL STUDENT NEEDS SERVICES?

The answer *yes* is only a prompt for further investigation. The district must follow up with a language survey and must administer W-APT to identify skills in the four domains (reading, writing, speaking and listening). ELLs should be placed at an age-appropriate grade level. Under serious circumstances, it is possible to place an ELL at only one grade level below. A program must be designed to improve a student's English proficiency when services are required.

► WHAT SHOULD FOLLOW THE IDENTIFICATION OF AN ELL STUDENT?

Schools are required to provide informed parental notification as to why a child is in need of placement in a specialized language-instruction program. Parents have the right to choose among instruction programs if more than one type is offered. Parents must be informed no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year. If a child enters a program during the school year, this time frame is two weeks. Parents also have the right to immediately remove their child from a program for ELLs. When parents remove their child from the language program, schools are advised to file a written agreement. Schools must also notify parents of any failure of the program to make progress on the annual measurable objectives no later than 30 days after this failure occurs. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not require districts to seek parental authorization to test children for ELL classification. A suggestion is to notify parents the first year their child moves to a monitoring status and when the child is no longer receiving services.

► WHAT SHOULD BE THE PROGRAM CONTEXT?

Developing a program should allow for local variations. Districts should consider local characteristics in terms of demographics, ethnic and language diversity, district size, ELL population, and student enrollment — what is unique to a particular district. ELLs' results in terms of language ability are also key factors in determining what kind of services to provide and how often to deliver programs enabling children to speak, write, listen, read and comprehend the English language, as well as meeting the challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

► WHAT SHOULD BE THE PROGRAM GOALS AND COMPONENTS?

The purpose of Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is to implement language instruction to develop the English language proficiency that ELLs need to meet the same academic content and achievement standards other children are expected to meet. This aim must be tied to a district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), which describes strategies and how local resources are to be put forward to deliver the curriculum. The curriculum must be adjusted or modified to enable children to read, write, listen, speak and comprehend the English language and meet the state ELL standards aligned with the Show-Me Standards. The minimum program components are the ►

service goals, service delivery methods or implementation strategies, service monitoring, and service evaluation. The definitions of terms might help in understanding the content.

➤ **WHAT WOULD BE THE PROGRAM APPROACH?**

An ELL program must be consistent with sound, research-based educational theories for the purpose of attaining English language proficiency. District personnel working with ELLs must familiarize themselves with the “Educating Linguistically Diverse Students” handbook located online at dese.mo.gov/qs/me/ell.htm. Models described in this handbook will assist in terms of best practices suitable to the local context. ELLs need special language support that targets curriculum-modification strategies and techniques.

➤ **WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT THE ELL PROGRAM?**

School districts are required to hire highly qualified teachers to ensure quality instruction. The local context will again determine whether a school needs a paraprofessional under the supervision of a certified teacher or a full-time, ESOL-endorsed teacher. The ELL coordinator and the program implementer must work closely to address the ELLs’ needs. Districts enrolling 20 or more ELLs must hire a full-time, ESOL-endorsed teacher. When enrolling more than 20 ELLs, districts must strictly follow their local student-teacher ratios. All students needing services must be included in the program. There must not be a waiting list of ELLs in a district. General considerations on class size can be found in the “Ideal Components of an English Language Learning Policy” document at dese.mo.gov/qs/me/ell.htm. Districts hiring classroom paraprofessionals must be prepared to hire an ESOL-endorsed teacher as soon as 20 students are enrolled. A paraprofessional may be supported to meet the credentials leading to endorsement with Title III or other local funds.

➤ **WHAT WOULD MAKE AN ELL PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL?**

For information about professional development or for technical assistance in building local capacity, contact an instructional specialist at dese.mo.gov/qs/me/staff.html. The success of a program could be tied to how often a district evaluates its program and addresses weaknesses. Continuing the education of program personnel could also be helpful in bringing in new and fresh ideas. Talking to experienced neighboring districts might be the best move.

➤ **HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE ELL PROGRAM?**

Ongoing measures of program effectiveness through pre-established indicators will allow for adjusting, adapting and improving ELL services. Pretesting and post-testing could allow the comparison of results to determine student performance. While designing a program, educators must keep in mind an evaluation plan that charts accomplishments. Questions often asked include: What kind of instrument will be used? Who should be tested? When or how often should we test (e.g., beginning of year, midyear or end of year)? How should we go about testing, and what kind of data should we collect? What kind of analysis should be conducted? These questions can help in developing an evaluation device. Relying on local data allows for a timely address of weaknesses. Accomplishments must be backed by strong, readily available data.

➤ **WHERE CAN A DISTRICT GET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?**

The best document to consult is the “Educating Linguistically Diverse Students” handbook. The MELL program was designed by the Department to provide districts with the help needed to build local capacity and to improve ELL services as outlined in the NCLB Act. Visit dese.mo.gov/qs/me/staff.html to locate the nearest technical assistant. Also, visit the website for the St. Louis School District at www.slps.org, which provides translated forms for districts to use. You might also contact a high-incidence school district, such as the Kansas City School District, to seek help with translated forms. School districts are encouraged to share their experiences and their translated forms with the MELL program staff and other school districts’ educators. ➡

To comply with MSIP requirements, all school districts in Missouri must have in place an ELL policy or plan and ELL assessment results from previous years. A plan or policy in this context does not contain enough information to be called a program. An instructional ELL program addresses specific needs through a methodic course of action stated to allow ELLs to acquire expected English language proficiency. ELLs are expected to acquire English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, speaking and comprehension. This will enable them to meet the challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. An ongoing evaluation allows for program improvement.



Office of Quality Schools

Yaya Badji, Supervisor, Migrant Education and English Language Learning (MELL)
205 Jefferson St., P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Phone: 573-522-1567 or toll-free 877-435-7537 • Fax: 573-526-6698
Email: yaya.badji@dese.mo.gov • Website: dese.mo.gov

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