

North East Independent School District

Elementary English as a Second Language (ESL) Parent Handbook



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Elementary ESL Handbook

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This handbook offers information on language acquisition, required testing, modifications, grading, assessment, and answers to frequently asked questions about the ESL students and the Elementary ESL program in North East ISD. We hope you will find this handbook a helpful resource.

A C R O N Y M S

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BICS | Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills—The social language needed to function in society with some degree of comfort. |
| CALP | Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency—The language of reading and writing, integrated with listening and speaking, needed to function successfully in content (academic) area settings. |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| ESOL | English for Speakers of Other Languages |
| ELL | English Language Learners |
| HLS | Home Language Survey |
| ITBS | Iowa Test of Basic Skills |
| LAS | Language Assessment Scales (English oral language proficiency test for Grades 1-12) |
| LEP | Limited English Proficient (Most educators take exception to this acronym, which starts with the word “limited”, implying limited ability, limited intelligence, or limited expectations. On the contrary, ESL students already have at least one language and are acquiring an additional language.) |
| LPAC | Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (this committee is comprised of the parent of an LEP student in NEISD and one or more staff professionals, such as the ESL teacher or supervisor. Individual LPAC recommendations are filed in the student’s LEP folder in the PRC.) |
| Non-LEP | Non-Limited English Proficient |
| RPTE | Reading Proficiency Test in English |
| TAKS | Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills |

Explanation for ESL Programs Codes

ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS

- Level 1: Pre-Production
- minimal comprehension
 - no verbal production
- Level 2: Early Production
- limited comprehension
 - one or two word responses
- Level 3: Speech Emergence
- good communication
 - production of simple sentences with some errors
 - short phrases
 - dialogue
- Level 4: Intermediate
- may have excellent comprehension
 - makes few grammatical errors
- Level 5: Advanced Fluency
- may exhibit near-native speech in English

ESL Classes

In an ESL class teachers use techniques for developmental language learning based on current research in second language acquisition. The focus of study integrates English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, ESL students learn survival, social, and academic vocabulary and key concepts to give students the language to communicate with native speakers at school and in the community.

Speech production may come slowly for beginning English speakers. Therefore, nonverbal communication is encouraged. Cooperative learning, thematic units, use of technology, and art provide a wide variety of learning opportunities. Teachers consider individual learning styles, prior educational experiences, interests, needs, strengths, and weaknesses and adapt the program as needed for student success.

Resources, such as literature-based, culturally diverse materials, are used in the classroom. ESL practices encourage authentic and holistic use of the language, such as role-playing or writing for publication. Students are encouraged and given opportunities to publish their original writings and other products.

While cultural differences are honored and respected, ESL teachers provided opportunities for students to understand American history and its influence on American culture. Legends, biographies, heroes, holiday observances, and politics create a forum for discussion, comparison, and understanding of cultures.

LEP Identification Process

When students register in the district, the parents or guardians complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). If a language other than English is indicated on students' HLS, the administration of an oral language proficiency test (LAS) is required before they enter classes at the schools. This identification and placement process takes place in accordance with the Texas Education Agency 19 TAC Chapter 89: Commissioner's Rules Concerning State Plan for Educating Limited English Proficient Students. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter089/ch089bb.html>

Programs, Services, and Resources

At Risk, and Other Programs and Services

- LEP students are eligible for At Risk services under Senate Bill 702. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/2001comp/at_risk.pdf
- LEP students are eligible to receive other services and entrance into programs, such as special education, gifted and talented, compensatory education, and CATE. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, creed, or national origin. <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/coord/titlevi.htm>
If assessment is recommended, linguistically and culturally non-biased instruments must be utilized to obtain an appropriate evaluation.

Resources

- Developing the Academic Competence of Speakers of Other Languages <http://www.esc1.net/instructionalsupport/manual.pdf>

ESL Students in Mainstream Classes

Modifications used by teachers

- Use preferential seating close to the front of the classroom
- Provide visual clues, such as facial expressions, gestures, pictures, cartoons, posters, charts, maps, manipulatives, and videos.
- Give clear, short oral directions accompanied by written directions.
- Check for understanding. (Head nodding doesn't count!)
- Used a peer buddy system.
- Provide cooperative learning experiences.
- Find opportunities for one-on-one help.
- Use illustrated simplified texts and/or texts in students' first language.
- Promote multicultural awareness in the classroom.
- Activate prior knowledge.
- Model and teach learning strategies.
- Emphasize comprehension over pronunciation.

Assessment, Grading, and Retention of ESL/LEP Students

TEA regulations require districts to modify instruction, pacing, and materials to ensure LEP students have the opportunity to master the TEKS of the required curriculum. If necessary, students demonstrate competency independent of their English language skills. This requires modifications of testing instruments and types. Multiple and varied instruments may be used. Academic language takes much longer to develop than social language, so LEP students should not be failed on the basis of lack of proficiency in English.

Elementary teachers are encouraged to use ESL strategies to assist the LEP students in mastering the TEKS for courses and electives required for promotion or graduation. Holistic assessment, such as portfolio assessment, is strongly encouraged. The use of English as a second language strategies shall not impede the awarding of credit toward meeting promotions or graduation requirements. (19 TAC 89.1210) English proficiency should not be a factor in determining promotion.

Modifying tests

- ◆ Students use drawings, demonstrations, dramatizations, posters, charts, and models to convey competence.
- ◆ Students create their own test questions. This involves them in the process and helps them develop an understanding of the information.
- ◆ Students take open-book tests or open-notes tests.
- ◆ The teacher reads aloud directions and/or content of tests as needed.
- ◆ Students use bilingual dictionaries during testing.

Language Acquisition

- ◆ Students whose first language is not English have specific needs as learners. *Not only do they have to acquire a new language, they also have to adapt to American culture and actively participate in American schools.*
- ◆ Language is embedded in culture. When learning English, non-native speakers transfer the knowledge they have in their own language and culture to the acquisition of the new language. *Students, who are well educated in their first language, use their thinking skills in the acquisition of English.*
- ◆ Language is contextual in nature. Language acquisition is a developmental process that relies on the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills within the context of academic learning. *Since language acquisition is a developmental process, time is a major factor in the student's progress.*
- ◆ Students may be fluent in "survival" and social language (**basic interpersonal communication skills or BICS**) but struggle with **CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency)**. *CALP takes longer to develop because it is the complex level of reading, writing, speaking, and listening needed to function successfully in an academic environment.*

Factors that affect the acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency include age, motivation, and attitude. The most important factor is the level of literacy and academic background in the native language. A student, who is below level in academic skills in the native language, faces a major challenge in learning the academic skills in English. Current research states that CALP takes five to seven years to acquire for some students and seven to ten years in others. (The BICS and CALP theories are based on extensive research by Jim Cummins of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.)

* LAS =Language Assessment Scales – Oral Proficiency Test used to assess oral proficiency level of English Language Learners.

Adapted from:
Word-a-BD-levels of proficiency in the language instruction

Modifications for ESL Students

“Although English conversation skills may be acquired quite rapidly by ESL students, upward of five years may be required for ESL students to reach a level of academic proficiency in English comparable to their native-English speaking peers...” Cummins

1. peer tutoring
2. peer collaboration
3. cooperative learning
4. presentation and representation of information using diagrams, graphs, timelines, graphic organizers
5. restatement of content or question
6. highlighted texts
7. pre-reading of content in a simplified format
8. use of pictures
9. role playing
10. reduced or modified assignments (this is especially important if you know the student is living with parents who do not speak English!)
11. videos
12. teacher modeling
13. student dictates responses to teacher or peer
14. word banks and vocabulary cards with pictures
15. multi-sensory teaching aids
16. key concepts
17. text features – note helpful visual and graphic aspects of texts
18. K-W-L
19. semantic mapping
20. semantic feature analysis
21. alternative assessments
22. copy of overheads or notes

The first stage of language acquisition is the silent phase. Students listen and begin processing information in English. They often need to connect the lesson to their background of experience in their first language. Silence does not always mean lack of understanding. However, ESL students do not like to ask questions or tell the teacher they don't understand while they are in the silent phase.