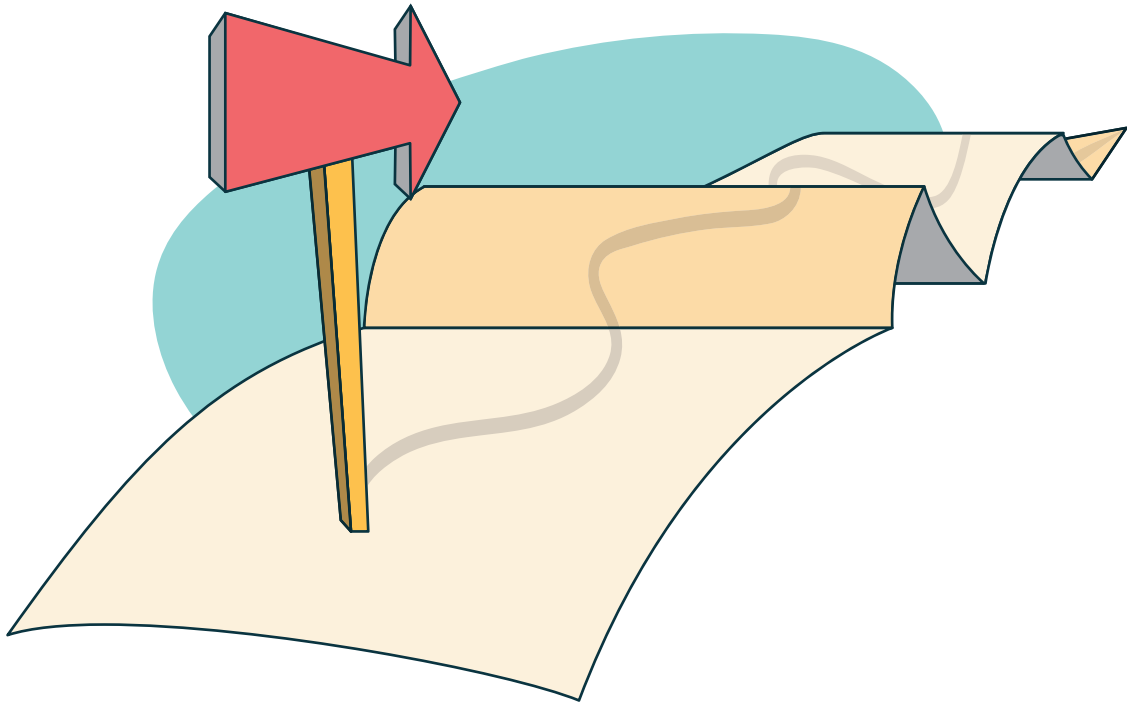


# Parent Guide

for English learners



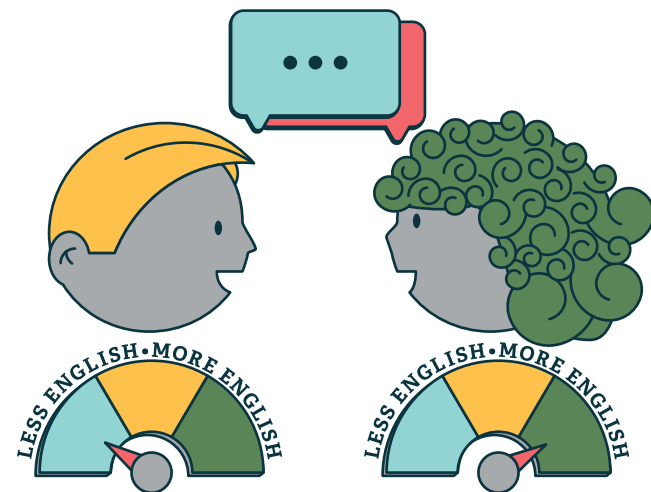
## What do I need to know?

As the parent of an English learner there is a lot you need to know, including how your child is:

- **Identified** as an English learner
- **Taught** English and other subjects
- **Tested**, tested, and tested some more
- **Determined to be proficient** in academic English and moved out of English learner services

This guide gives you basic information about each of these topics. It will help you talk with your child's school, ask the right questions, and support your child on their journey as an English learner.

An **English learner** is a student who is in the process of learning to speak, read, write, and understand **academic English**. This is the English that is used in classrooms, textbooks, and tests. English learners are usually students whose home language is not English.



## How does the school know that my child is an English learner?

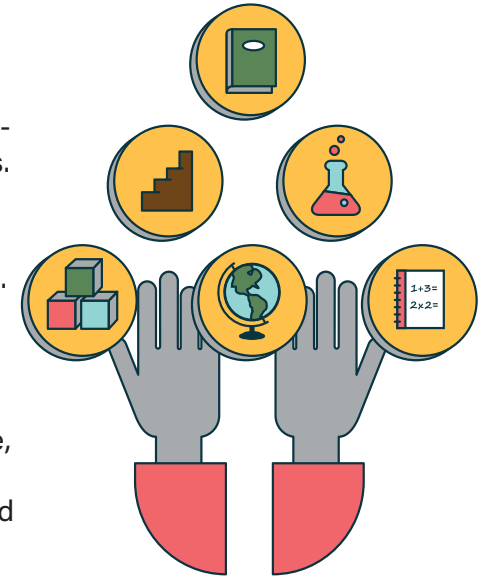
When you register your child for school, you will fill out a home language survey. Students who speak a language other than English are then tested. If the test shows that your child is not yet proficient in English, then they will be **classified** as an English learner. Each state has its own way of deciding whether a student is an English learner, but they all use a home language survey and an English language test.

## What kind of support will my child receive?

The law states that schools must teach English and other subjects, such as math and science, to English learners. This instruction is called **English language development**, and it helps students improve their English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while also learning about other subjects. There are two main types of programs for providing English language development:

- Bilingual programs use two languages to teach your child. One of these languages may be your home language.
- English immersion programs use only English to provide instruction.

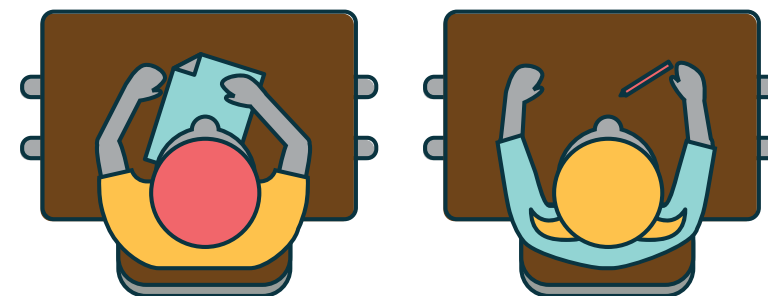
Schools must teach other subjects, such as math and science, in a way that all students can understand and learn. As a parent, you have the right to ask the school whether your child is getting this kind of instruction.



## How does the school know when my child is proficient in English?

Each year, schools must test all English learners. Students are determined to be proficient when they can speak, read, write, and understand academic English at a specific level. When they reach this level, they are **reclassified** and no longer receive English language development services, although the school will continue to check their progress.

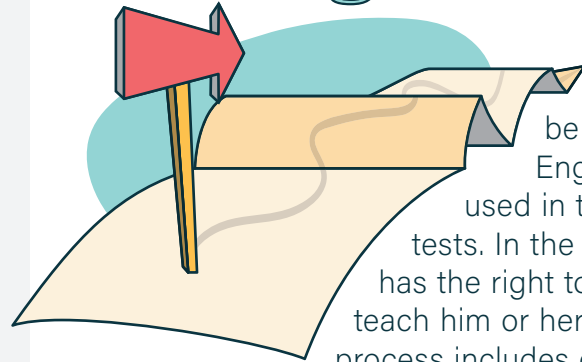
The following map will help you understand your child's journey as an English learner. Understanding this process will help you work with the school to ensure your child succeeds.



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## for English learners

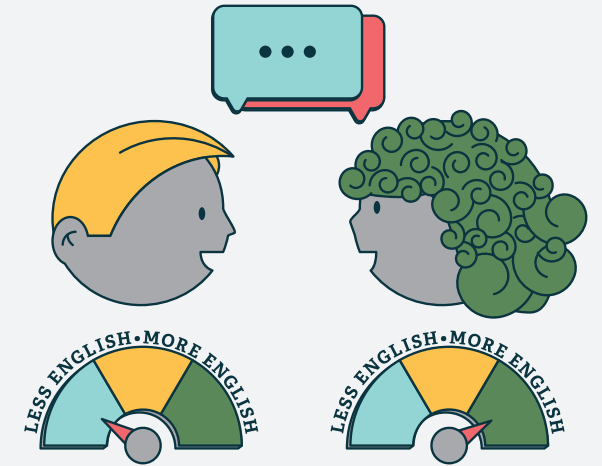
To be successful in school, students need to be able to use academic English—the language that is used in the classrooms, books, and tests. In the United States, your child has the right to receive extra support to teach him or her academic English. This process includes classification, English language development, and reclassification.



### How is your child identified as an English learner? (Classification)



When you register your child in school for the first time, you will be asked to fill out a home language survey.



If you speak a language other than English at home, your child will be tested to check his or her language skills.

### How will your child learn English? (English language development)

Depending on the results of the test, your child will receive two types of supports. First, the school is obligated to give special instruction to develop academic English. Second, the school has to ensure that your child understand the content of the classes. If you do not want your child to receive these supports, you have the right to refuse them.

The school must teach your child the same math, science, and social studies as native English speakers and ensure that your child understands the content. Make sure to ask your school about your child's progress.

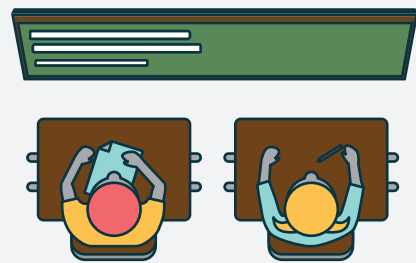


### How will you know when your child has learned academic English? (Reclassification)

Every year, your child will take a test. When they can speak, write, read, and listen in English, they will be reclassified and no longer considered an English learner.



When your child has learned enough academic English and passed the test, they will no longer receive English language development supports (although they will continue to learn English with other students), and they will never have to take the test again. Teachers will continue to check your child's progress. Continue to ask the teacher how your child is doing.



If your child still needs help, they will continue to receive English language development supports.

## Who can I talk to if I have questions?

Your best source of information is your child's school. Teachers may not know everything about how your child is learning English, but they can direct you to someone who does. You have the right to translation and can request it.

### English Language Development Teachers

English Language Development Teachers teach English to your child. They will know about how your child is learning English. They meet your child's classroom teachers to plan lessons and instruction.



#### You can ask them ...

What type of program does the school use to teach English?  
What is my child's most recent English language proficiency score? What was it last year?  
When do you expect my child to reclassify?  
How can I support my child's English proficiency at home?  
What support does my child receive in your classroom to help them develop their English language skills?  
What support does my child receive in your classroom to help them learn about other subjects? (This is often called "grade-level knowledge.")

### Classroom Teachers

Classroom Teachers teach other subjects to your child, such as math and science. In elementary school, your child may have only one classroom teacher. In middle school and high school, they will have many teachers.



#### You can ask them ...

How is my child's grade-level knowledge developing?  
How can I support my child's grade-level knowledge at home?  
What support does my child receive to help them develop language in your classroom?  
What support does my child receive to help them learn grade-level knowledge in your classroom?

### Parent Liaisons

Parent Liaisons serve as a link between the school and students' families. This person may also be called a family coordinator. They are often bilingual and are an important support for parents.

#### You can ask them ...

Who can I talk to about my child's English language development?  
How can I request a translator at the school?  
Who can I talk to if I think my child is gifted?  
Who can I talk to if I think my child has a disability?  
Who can I talk to if my family needs help finding resources in the community?

### Principals

Principals and assistant principals manage all aspects of the school, including all teachers. If you have concerns that cannot be addressed by your child's teacher, then you should speak with the school principal.



#### You can ask them ...

What procedures does the school use for reclassification?  
What support does my child receive in English language development classes?  
What support does my child receive in their other classes to help them develop their English language skills?  
What support will my child receive after they are reclassified?

## Know your rights

As the parent of an English learner student, you and your child both have rights. These include:

- **Access** – English learner students have the civil right to be taught both English and grade-level content without being segregated from their classmates.
- **Notification** – Schools are required to provide parents of English learner students with an annual update of their child's English language development progress.
- **Choice** – Parents have the right to refuse English learner instruction or to choose another method of instruction, such as bilingual education, if it is available.
- **Communication** – Schools are required to ensure there is meaningful communication with parents, in a language the parents can understand. Parents also have the right to request an interpreter at school meetings and to have school materials translated into a language they can understand.
- **Special programs** – English learner students have the right to participate in all special programs. This includes advanced courses (e.g., honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate), talented and gifted programs, and—if a child has special learning needs—special education.

Every state has an office that supports English learners, their parents, and the school staff who work with them. These offices may have websites for parents that are translated into different languages. Here are the offices for the Northwest states:

**Alaska:** <https://education.alaska.gov/ESEA/TitleIII-A/>

**Oregon:** <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=106>

**Washington:** <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/Parents.aspx>

**Montana:** [http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/IndianEd/index.html?gpm=1\\_5](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/IndianEd/index.html?gpm=1_5)

**Idaho:** <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/el-migrant/el/>

Help us improve this guide by sending us feedback to [Mary.Martinez-Wenzl@educationnorthwest.org](mailto:Mary.Martinez-Wenzl@educationnorthwest.org)

