

X. Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Multilingual Parents

- *SEAs and LEAs have an obligation to communicate meaningfully with LEP parents and to adequately notify them of information about any program, service, or activity called to the attention of non-LEP parents.*

LEAs must develop and implement a process for determining:

- (1) If parents and guardians have limited English proficiency;
- (2) What their primary language is; and
- (3) What their language needs are. An LEA may use a student registration form, such as the home language survey (HLS), to inquire about whether a parent or guardian requires oral and/or written communication in a language other than English.

- *LEAs and schools should translate the HLS into languages that are common in the school and surrounding community.¹*

Successful communication provides LEP parents the school-related information they need to make informed decisions about, and be helpful participants in, their children's education. This may include but not be limited to information about language assistance programs, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, requests for parent permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, gifted and talented programs, and magnet and charter schools.²

- **Students, siblings, friends, and untrained staff members are not considered qualified translators or interpreters, even if they are bilingual.**
- **All interpreters and translators, including staff acting in this capacity, should be proficient in the target languages; have knowledge of specialized terms or concepts in both languages; and be trained in the role of an interpreter or translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality.³**

It is essential to understand the cultures of LEP families and “integrate cultural traditions of families throughout the school” (Breiseth, 2011).⁴

Title I of the ESEA, as amended by ESSA, now requires LEAs to conduct effective outreach to parents of ELs, including regular meetings [see Section 1112(e)(3)(c)].⁵

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2017). English Learner Tool Kit (2nd Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*