

February 27, 2015

Dear Colleagues:

I know you share my commitment to the success of all Wisconsin students, and I appreciate the hard work you put forth to ensure every student leaves Wisconsin's public school system college- and career- ready. In that vein, I am writing to share updated guidance from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice regarding students who are English language learners (EL). This guidance is helpful in clarifying our shared responsibilities toward providing access and equity for EL students. Many of these requirements are also part of Wisconsin law.

Some of the protections EL students are entitled to include:

- Identification of potential EL students as part of the enrollment process;
- A locally-determined appropriate and effective EL program in the least segregated manner possible;
- Qualified staff and sufficient resources in their EL program;
- Services within a reasonable amount of time;
- Equal opportunities to participate in programs and extracurricular activities;
- Close monitoring;
- Annual assessment of proficiency (In Wisconsin, we use the ACCESS test); and
- Meaningful communication and adequate notice with parents in a language they can understand.

For more information on these and other requirements, I strongly encourage you to review this [fact sheet](#) about schools' obligations under federal law to ensure that EL students can participate equally and this [fact sheet](#) about schools' obligations under federal law to communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they understand. ED's Office of English Language Acquisition has also provided a [toolkit](#) to help school districts identify EL students. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has created an [Effective Practices webpage](#) with resources for educating English language learners. If you have questions or concerns about this information, please contact Rebecca Vail, Director, Content and Learning Team, at rebecca.vail@dpi.wi.gov or 608-266-2364.

Of course, providing these important services requires resources, which are increasingly falling on local school districts. That is why DPI requested an increase in categorical aids to support existing bilingual-bicultural education programs and to make all of Wisconsin's EL students eligible for this aid. Unfortunately, these items were not included in the Governor's budget. If you feel that these additional supports would assist you, please contact your [legislators](#).

Thank you for your continued service to Wisconsin's children.

Sincerely,



Tony Evers, PhD
State Superintendent

TE:cms