

Language Access

The Richland School District’s Board of Directors (the “Board”) is committed to improving meaningful, two-way communication and promoting access to District programs, services, and activities for students and their parents and families. The Board recognizes that students whose family members have limited English proficiency might also speak or be learning multiple languages and are assets to the community. It is crucial that the district seek to address language barriers and do so free of charge. To that end and as required by law the district will develop and adopt a plan for implementing and maintaining a language access program that is culturally responsive, provides for systematic family engagement developed through meaningful stakeholder engagement, and is tailored to the district’s current population of students and families who have limited English proficiency.

At a minimum, the district’s plan for a language access program will adhere to the principles of an effective language access program for culturally responsive, systematic family engagement, which are:

- Accessibility and equity. This means that schools provide access to all; two-way communication is a priority and is woven into the design of all programs and services.
- Accountability and transparency. This means that the language access program and decision-making processes at all levels are: Open, accessible, and usable to families; readily available; continuously improved based on ongoing feedback from families and staff; and regulated by a clear and just complaint process.
- Responsive culture. This means that schools are safe, compassionate places where each family’s opinions are heard, needs are met, and contributions are valued. School staff are humble and empathetic towards families.
- Focus on relationships. This means that schools seek to understand families without judgment on an individual level, building trust through respectful relationships that recognize the unique strengths that each family and student possesses.

The district will implement its Language Access Program by the 2023-2024 school year.

Definitions

1. Persons with “**limited English proficiency**” are individuals who are unable to communicate effectively in English either verbally or in writing, or both, because their primary language is not English, and they have not developed fluency in the English language. A person with limited English proficiency may have difficulty in one or more of four domains of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Staff are urged to remember that limited English proficiency may be context-specific—e.g., a parent may have sufficient English language skills to understand, communicate and/or exchange basic information with a teacher, but they may not have sufficient skills to communicate detailed, specific information needed in a particular context, like an IEP meeting, a 504 meeting, or a student discipline hearing.
2. “**Primary language**” means the primary language spoken by a student’s parent or guardian, or the predominant language spoken in the student’s home. Parents may have more than one primary language and/or dialect.

3. **“Language services”** refers to a broad spectrum of services used or required to facilitate communication and understanding between speakers of different languages, and typically includes interpretation and translation services.
4. **“Interpretation”** means the process of first fully understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed message and then faithfully rendering it into another spoken or signed language.
5. **“Interpreter”** means a spoken language or sign language interpreter working in a public school, as defined in RCW 28A.150.010, to interpret for students’ families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom,
6. **“Translation”** means the process of communicating the meaning of a written source-language text into an equivalent target language text in such a way that the content of both texts can be considered the same.
7. **“Qualified Interpreter”** means an interpreter who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively using necessary specialized vocabulary.

Identification of Families Needing Language Access Services

The district will accurately and in a timely manner identify parents/family members of students with limited English proficiency and provide them information in a language they can understand regarding the language service resources available within the district.

Oral Interpretation

The district will take reasonable steps to provide parents/family members with limited English proficiency with competent oral interpretation of materials or information about any program, service, and activity provided to parents who do not have limited English proficiency and to facilitate any interaction with district staff significant to the student’s education. The district will provide such services upon request and/or when it may be reasonably anticipated by District staff that such services will be necessary.

Written Translation

The district will provide a written translation of vital documents for each limited English proficient group that constitutes at least 5 percent of the District’s total parent population or 1000 persons, whichever is less. For purposes of this policy, “vital documents” include, but are not limited to, those related to:

- registration, application, and selection;
- academic standards and student performance;
- safety, discipline, and conduct expectations;
- special education and related services, Section 504 information, and McKinney-Vento services;
- policies and procedures related to school attendance;
- requests for parent permission in activities or programs;
- opportunities for students or families to access school activities, programs, and services;
- student/parent handbook;
- the District’s Language Access Plan and Program and related services or resources available;

- school closure information; and
- any other documents notifying parents of their rights under applicable state laws and/or containing information or forms related to consent or filing complaints under federal law, state law, or District policy.

If the District is unable to translate a vital document due to resource limitations or if a small number of families require the information in a language other than English such that document translation is unreasonable, the district will still provide the information to parents in a language they can understand through competent oral interpretation.

Staff

The Superintendent will designate a staff member to serve as the Language Access Liaison/Coordinator, who will monitor and facilitate compliance with state and federal laws related to language access and family engagement. The Language Access Coordinator's name and contact information will be widely shared so parents, school staff, and community members may contact them to inquire about language access services.

All school administrators, particularly those who have the most interaction with the public, such as registrars and enrollment staff, certificated staff, and other appropriate staff as determined by the Language Access Coordinator/Liaison, will receive guidance on meaningful communication with parents/family members with limited English proficiency, best practices for working with an interpreter, how to access an interpreter or translation services in a timely manner, language services available within the District and other information deemed necessary by the Language Access Coordinator/Liaison to effectuate the language access plan and program.

Appropriate district staff, as determined by the Language Access Coordinator/Liaison, will also receive guidance on the interaction between this policy and the district's policy on effective communication with students, families, and community members with disabilities.

Review and Update

The Board will periodically review, evaluate, and further update this policy and its associated procedure based on pertinent data, including the data collected according to the accompanying procedure. This review will also include community feedback collected according to this policy and procedure and with opportunity for participation from the school community, including school personnel, students, parents, families, and the community members.

The Board will annually review the district's spending on language access services and consider whether budget adjustments are needed to effectively engage with families who would benefit from Language Access services.

Legal References: Chapter 28A.155 RCW Special Education
 Chapter 28A.642 RCW Discrimination prohibition

Chapter 49.60 RCW Discrimination – Human Rights
Commission

Chapter 392-400 WAC Pupils

WAC 392-400-215 Student rights

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Adoption Date: June 27, 2023

RSD No. 400