Chapter 3
Other Educational Programs and Services for Your Child

> "Other Educational Programs and Services for Your Child" is the third chapter of the English Learner Family Toolkit, which is meant to support families of English learners (ELs) in the U.S. education system. Each chapter has five parts: (1) Overview, (2) Family and Student Rights, (3) Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff, (4) Tips for Families, and (5) Resources. Information in each chapter varies. As readers can choose to access only certain chapters of the toolkit, it is important to note that some information may be repeated in multiple chapters.

Overview

Schools provide opportunities for students beyond the general education program. These may include

- tutoring for students who need more support;
- advanced classes[25] to challenge students;
- online or distance learning; and
- disability-related services[26] for students with disabilities.

To find out what educational programs and services your child's school offers, ask the school staff. They can help you find what is appropriate for your child. Some services require a fee, and for other services there is no cost. However, not all students are eligible. Ask the staff at your child's school about eligibility for the programs. These educational programs may help your child's learning, help your child explore their interests, and help them succeed academically and in life.

Family and Student Rights

As a family member with school-aged children, you have certain rights. This is very important: A parent's home country, citizenship, or immigration status does not change these rights. These rights include the following.

- Students have the right to be free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, and disability.[27]

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[25] For example, the Advanced Placement (AP) Program offers classes with college-level coursework for high school students. Students seeking this academic challenge may choose from their school's offered AP classes, each of which offers an optional, yearly AP exam. Students with a qualifying score on an AP exam might earn credits and/or accelerated placement in college. See https://apcentral. collegeboard.org/about-ap/ap-a-glance. Some schools offer advanced courses through the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which can also lead to college credits and/or accelerated placement in college. See https://www.ibo.org/. For students in other grade levels, schools may offer specialized coursework for gifted and talented students.

[26] The term "disability-related services" may refer to special education and related services provided to children with disabilities who are eligible for services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and/or regular or special education and related aids and services provided to qualified students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. See Chapter 3 for more information on disability-related services for EL students with disabilities.

[27] Educational institutions have a responsibility to protect every student's right to learn in a safe environment free from unlawful discrimination and to prevent unjust deprivations of that right. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces several federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (This includes discrimination based on a person's limited English proficiency or English learner status; and actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, including membership in a religion that may be perceived to exhibit such characteristics (such as Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh individuals)); sex discrimination is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and age discrimination is prohibited by the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. OCR also has responsibilities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits disability discrimination by public entities, whether or not they receive federal financial assistance.

■ Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) says that school districts must provide the required communication to parents of ELs under Title I in an understandable format and, when possible, in a language that the parents understand.[28] They must provide information to all parents, regardless of their native language or proficiency in English, about any program, service, or activity of a school district.[29] Additionally, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that school districts and SEAs ensure meaningful communication with LEP parents in a language they can understand and adequately notify LEP parents of information about any program, service, or activity of a school district or SEA that is called to the attention of non-LEP parents. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that consent (agreement or permission) from parents must be requested in the parent's native language, or through another form of communication understandable to the parents.[30] Communication with parents may include information about

   – enrollment and registration;
   – language assistance;
   – grievance procedures;[31]
   – notices of nondiscrimination;[32]
   – student discipline policies and procedures;
   – report cards;
   – requests for parent permission for student participation in district or school activities;
   – parent-teacher conferences;
   – parent handbooks;
   – gifted and talented education (GATE) programs;[33]
   – disability-related services for students with disabilities;[34]
   – magnet and public charter schools;[35]
   – language instruction educational programs;
   – childcare; or
   – extracurricular activities.

■ Schools must identify EL students who need services to learn English. First, most schools will ask you to fill out a Home Language Survey. The results of this survey will help the school decide if your child needs to be tested to determine eligibility for English language services.

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[28] ESEA 1112(e)(4).

[29] U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. *Fact Sheet: Information for limited proficient (LEP) parents and guardians and for schools and school districts that communicate with them.* Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf.

[30] IDEA, 34 CFR 300.9.

[31] A grievance procedure is an internal conflict resolution process that may address formal complaints by individuals. Developing, publicizing, and effectively implementing these procedures gives students and parents opportunities to address concerns at the local level. See https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/grievance.html.

[32] Notices of nondiscrimination require that schools notify students, parents, and others that they do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age, and, if applicable, that they provide equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/nondisc.html.

[33] Gifted education programs provide educational practices, procedures, and approaches for children who have been identified as gifted or talented. The main goals of these programs are generally enrichment and acceleration.

[34] The term "disability-related services" may refer to special education and related services provided to children with disabilities who are eligible for services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and/or regular or special education and related aids and services provided to qualified students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. See Chapter 3 for more information on disability-related services for EL students with disabilities.

[35] See definitions in Resources section.

- If your child is eligible for specialized language services based on the English proficiency assessment, the school will provide the services. However, you can decline to enroll your child in such services.[36]

- If your child is identified as an EL, the school must notify you in writing within 30 days of the school year starting. The school should provide information about your child's English language proficiency level, programs, and services available to meet your child's educational needs, and your right to opt your child out of a program or service for ELs.[37]

- If you decide to decline language services for your child, their status as an EL will remain. The school will continue to monitor your child's English proficiency and academic progress.

- States must report on the progress of students who exit EL status for four years after the students are no longer identified as ELs.[38]

- If school districts choose to temporarily use a curriculum focused solely on learning the English language, they must measure EL students' progress in core subjects (such as mathematics, science, and reading/language arts) to assess whether students have academic difficulties while learning English. For these students, districts must offer other services to ensure that EL students can catch up in core subject areas within a reasonable time. For example, some newcomer EL programs may at first utilize a curriculum aimed at the very essential English skills and then expand this curriculum to include instruction on core subjects. These services could include tutoring or access to intersession[39] or summer[40] programs.

- EL students must have access to grade-level instruction so that they can advance to the next grade level and meet graduation requirements.

- Schools must give ELs equal access to all school facilities and programs — including computer labs and science labs. This includes prekindergarten, magnet, and career and technical education (CTE) programs, as well as counseling services and online and distance learning opportunities. During remote learning, schools should give ELs hardware (e.g., computers) and software (e.g., programs) necessary to participate in school.

- ELs learning remotely must receive language instruction services from the school. Schools must also continue to provide ELs with language accommodations in their general education courses.

- Schools may not exclude ELs from specialized programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), honors, International Baccalaureate® (IB) courses,[41] and GATE programs.

- Schools must ensure that evaluation and testing procedures for GATE or other specialized courses do not exclude ELs because of their English proficiency levels.

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[36] ESEA 1112(e)(3).

[37] U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. *Fact sheet: Information for limited English proficient (LEP) parents and guardians and for schools and school districts that communicate with them.* Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf.

[38] Source: Non-Regulatory Guidance: English Learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiiguidenglishlearners92016.pdf.

[39] For schools on a year-round calendar, an intersession term is one of the periods throughout the year when the school (or part of the school) is not in session or does not provide annual instruction similar to the traditional school-year regular term. Any break in the regular term of a year-round school is considered an intersession term regardless of the season of the year in which it occurs (ED: 2017, Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children, Non-Regulatory Guidance, Chapter V, Question D3).

[40] A summer term occurs only in a school that operates under a traditional calendar school year. The summer term is the period of time when the regular term of the school year is not in session (ED: 2017, Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children, Non-Regulatory Guidance, Chapter V, Question D2).

[41] The International Baccalaureate® (IB) offers a continuum of international education. According to its website, the program encourages both personal and academic achievement, challenging students to excel in their studies and in their personal development. In order to teach IB programs, schools must be authorized. See https://www.ibo.org/programmes/ for more information.

Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff

The following are sample, optional questions you may ask school staff about educational programs and services for your child.

General Questions

1. How is my child doing in school? Is my child's English where it needs to be?

2. Can you explain the program(s) available to help my child learn English? Is there more than one option? If so, how do I enroll my child in a language instruction program, such as an English language learning (ELL) or English as a second language (ESL) program?

3. What can we do at home to help my child learn in "_____" class? Is there homework help available (e.g., a call-in number or website)?

4. Will my child graduate on time with a regular high school diploma? If my child does not meet the requirements to graduate high school with a regular high school diploma, what other certificates, credentials, or alternative diplomas are available?

5. What does my child need to do to be college-ready or skilled in a trade?

6. Is there a trade school training program or other CTE program offered at this school?

7. Can my child enroll in dual-enrollment courses to earn credits towards college or university?

Tutoring

1. My child is having trouble in "_____." How can I get more help for him/her?

Summer or Intersession Programs

1. Does the school offer summer or intersession programs to support my child's progress in classes like reading and math?

2. Is my child eligible to receive financial assistance for summer and/or intersession program fees?

Advanced Classes

1. How does my child get into honors or advanced classes?

2. My child wants to go to college; what classes does he or she need to take to be college-ready?

3. Should my child be in advanced classes at school? (Advanced classes may include honors and AP or IB classes as well as classes for students identified as gifted and talented.)

4. What do I need to do for my child to enroll in these classes?

5. Do these classes cost money? If there are fees for these classes or related exams, are fee waivers or scholarships available?

Online Classes or Distance Learning

1. Are online courses available from the school?

2. How can I enroll my child in such courses?

3. What can these courses do to help my child's educational needs?

4. How does the school make sure the course is accessible to my child if he or she has a disability?

5. Are there places where we can get a free computer, internet access, and/or help with using the necessary technology?

Tips for Families

General Tips

- Talk with your child's teachers to know how your child is doing in school.
- Ask your child's teachers or school staff about what language assistance your child is receiving to help him or her to learn English.
- Many schools have online parent portals that parents can access to learn important information about their child and the school. Ask the school to show you how to access and use the parent portal.
- Schools have different programs for teaching English. Ask the school what programs they offer. Ask how to enroll your child.
- Your child will likely have homework each day. Help them with their homework. Have a set homework place and time. Ask your child to explain their homework to you. Make sure your child completes their homework and turns it in for credit.
- Homework help may be available. Ask your school if such help is available.
- Each student must meet the state's graduation requirements to graduate high school with a regular high school diploma. Each grade has grade-level standards and expectations for students. Understanding these requirements will help your child be successful in school.

Tutoring

- Some schools and organizations offer before- or after-school tutoring. Some of these programs may be free.
- You may also hire a private tutor directly. They charge a fee. Look on the school's bulletin board for notices by private tutors or ask the school staff for recommendations.
- It is important to get help early when your child begins to have trouble with a class.

Summer or Intersession Programs

- Some schools offer summer and/or intersession programs in subjects like reading and math. Ask school staff if, and when, these programs are available.
- Ask the school whether your child is eligible to attend these programs. If there are fees, ask whether financial assistance or reduced rates are available.

Advanced Classes

- Schools may offer gifted, honors, AP, and IB classes. Ask questions to understand the different classes. Ask the school to consider your child for these classes.

Online or Distance Learning

- Ask the school to provide information and instructions for accessing the remote learning website for your school/district.
- Ask if the school provides free or low cost access to computers and/or the internet.
- Ask if the school provides remote learning resources that do not require an internet connection.
- Public libraries may provide free access to computers and/or the internet.[42]
- Fast food restaurants, coffee shops, and other public places may have free internet.
- Ask the school about online courses. Does the school provide access to online content courses, i.e., math, science, and social studies for students? Does the school provide access to online English language courses for students and/or families?

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[42] The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program) is a temporary federal program that launched on May 12, 2021, to help eligible households pay for internet service during the pandemic. For students whose families are struggling to afford their monthly internet service, this program may be able to help. The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) administers the EBB Program under the direction of the FCC.

Resources

General Resources

GreatSchools has created *Milestones*. GreatSchools describes *Milestones* as follows: "This is a free online collection of videos aimed at helping parents learn grade-level expectations in grades K–12. *Milestones* has students showing what success looks like in reading, writing, and math, grade by grade. High school *Milestones* shows real-world skills students should know as well as the academic ones." https://www.greatschools.org/gk/milestones/ ***This resource is available in English and Spanish.***

KidsHealth has created *10 Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in Elementary School.* https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/school-help-elementary.html ***This resource is available in English and Spanish.***

Math.com "The World of Math Online" offers homework help, practice lessons, tips for choosing a tutor, calculators and tools, and games. http://www.math.com/

National Association for College Admission Counseling has information about what courses are needed for college admission. https://www.nacacnet.org/

The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education provides parent education and other family engagement activities that may help you connect more meaningfully with your child's school. Click here to visit the Families page: https://oese.ed.gov/families/

PBS Parents has information on supporting your child's school success. http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/supporting-your-learner/role-of-parents/. ***This resource is available in English and Spanish.***

There are 13 **Statewide Family Engagement Centers** in the U.S. These centers provide help and training to state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) in promoting family engagement policies, programs, and activities that lead to student development and academic achievement. Click here to find the center in your state: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/statewide-family-engagement-centers-program/

TODAY Parenting Guides is a collection of resources with information about almost every aspect of your child's development. Information is divided by grade level and topic. https://www.parenttoolkit.com/

Advanced Classes

College Board is a mission-driven organization that oversees the national AP program. Its Parent Resources page provides guidance and resources that can help families support their children in their post-secondary education journeys. https://parents.collegeboard.org/?navId=aps-parents

Equity in Gifted/Talented Education is a website run by the Texas Education Agency. It provides practical resources and information for identifying and serving linguistically diverse gifted/talented learners. https://www.gtequity.org/

Online or Distance Learning

eLearning has created *Getting the Most Out of Your eLearning Course: 10 Study Tips for Online Learners*. This article shares 10 study tips for online learners that will help them succeed while studying for an online course. https://elearningindustry.com/10-study-tips-for-online-learners-getting-the-most-out-of-your-elearning-course

NCELA: Ensuring Continuity of Learning and Operations is a webpage that includes resources for EL educators, students, and families on various topics related to distance learning. Some of the resources on this

page provide information on culturally responsive practices and native language resources, and they also help EL families support their children during remote learning. https://ncela.ed.gov/ensuring-continuity-of-learning-and-operations. ***Some resources on this page are available in languages other than English.***

Definitions

Bilingual LIEPs provide instruction in English and an EL's first or home language. These programs may include the participation of English proficient students in addition to ELs to develop bilingual skills in both groups of students. Two examples of bilingual LIEPs are:

- **Dual-language education programs**, also known as two-way immersion programs. These programs serve both EL and non-EL students. The goals of dual-language programs are to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in English and a partner language (e.g., Spanish), promote high academic achievement in both languages and develop understanding and appreciation of multiple cultures. There are two types of dual-language programs: two-way and one-way. Two-way programs serve ELs and non-ELs by having both groups in the same classroom for academic instruction in both languages. One-way programs serve predominantly students who share the same language background (e.g., ELs whose first language is Spanish). Dual-language programs generally start at the beginning of elementary school (in either kindergarten or grade one) and continue throughout elementary school, with some programs continuing at the secondary level. Some states may have specific policies or eligibility criteria regarding EL placement into dual-language programs.[43]

- **Transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs**, also known as early exit bilingual education, use an EL's first or home language for instruction. These programs maintain and develop skills in the first or main language and culture while introducing, maintaining, and developing skills in English. The primary purpose of a TBE program is to help the EL transition to an English-only instructional program while receiving academic subject instruction in the student's first or home language.[44]

ESL LIEPs provide instruction in English with classroom materials and teaching adapted to the learning needs of ELs. ESL LIEPs may include both language and content instruction or just language instruction.[45] Two examples of ESL LIEPs are:

- **Content-based ESL programs**[46] provide language instruction using academic content like science and social studies. Students in these programs may also have a separate ESL class during their school day or may receive pull-out ESL instruction where they work with an educator for short periods during other classes. The goals of these programs are both the development of English language skills and preparation for students to meet academic achievement standards.

- **Sheltered English immersion programs**[47] provide instruction that introduces both language and content at the same time by using teaching techniques adapted to ELs' language needs. The focus is on teaching academic content rather than the English language itself, even though English learning may be one of the instructional goals.

A **language instruction educational program (LIEP)** is defined in the *ESEA*, for purposes of Title III of the *ESEA*, as "an instruction course in which an [EL] is placed for the purpose of developing and attaining English proficiency while meeting challenging state academic standards and that may make instructional use of both

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[43] U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2015). *Dual language education programs: Current state policies and practices*.

[44] U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *Language instruction educational programs (LIEPs): A review of the foundational literature*. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/language-instruction-ed-programs-report.pdf.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

English and a child's native language to enable the child to develop and attain English proficiency, and may include the participation of English proficient children if such a course is designed to enable all participating children to become proficient in English and a second language." (ESEA section 3201(7)). LIEPs can be divided into two types — bilingual programs and ESL programs — with various models that fit into each category. Program models may differ according to how states define them; public school district websites may have information regarding LIEPs posted on them. Within any LIEP, ELs may make progress in English with teaching that is adapted to meet the student's learning needs. The following examples of LIEPs are not a complete list but provide descriptions of the types of programs that your child's school district may offer.

A **magnet school** is defined in the ESEA for purposes of the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program as "a public elementary school, public secondary school, public elementary education center, or public secondary education center that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different racial backgrounds." Magnet schools may offer special instruction in academic content like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), or different languages. Magnet schools do not charge tuition to families, though they may have a separate admissions process. Magnet schools must comply with local, state, and federal laws.

A **public charter school** is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state, district, or other entity. It provides an elementary or secondary education program or both. Charter schools are free from some state or local rules and regulations, but they do need to meet the accountability standards outlined in their charters. A school's charter is reviewed periodically by the entity that granted it and can be taken away if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed, or if the accountability standards are not met.[48]

Public charter schools vary according to a state's charter school laws, so characteristics, such as the curriculum they use or the programs they offer, may differ from state to state. However, there are some common characteristics of charter schools. Among these, families choose to apply to have a child attend a charter school and attendance is free. Public charter schools also differ from traditional public schools because they can use innovative educational practices. Charter schools may offer in-person, online, and hybrid classes.

A charter school that receives federal money must comply with all applicable federal requirements. The U.S. Department of Education's **Office of Elementary and Secondary Education** operates the **Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP)**, which provides money to support the creation of new charter schools and the replication and expansion of existing, high-quality charter schools. A charter school receiving CSP money must meet the definition of a charter school in section 4310(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). See https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-legislation-table-contents/title-iv-21st-century-schools/#sec4310 for more information.

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[48] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The condition of education 2021: Public charter school enrollment* (2009–2018). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgb.asp.

Disability-Related Services

Overview

Some children are identified both as ELs and as having a disability. Under Part B of the IDEA, states and school districts must ensure that all EL students who may have a disability, regardless of the severity of the disability, are located, identified, and evaluated promptly. The evaluation determines whether the child needs special education and related services. If your child is eligible for special education and related services under IDEA, your child's school district must ensure that a written plan called an individualized education program (IEP) is developed by the IEP team (which includes, among others, the child's parents, and school officials). Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, schools must conduct an evaluation promptly of any student who needs or is believed to need special education or related services because of a disability.[49] If a student is eligible for services under Section 504, schools often document the elements of an individual student's services under Section 504 in a document, typically referred to as a Section 504 Plan.

Family and Student Rights

- Schools must provide EL students who have disabilities with both the language assistance and disability-related services to which they are entitled under federal law.

- IDEA requires that if a student is identified as an EL and as a student with a disability, the school must offer language assistance and disability-related services to the student at the same time.

- Disability evaluations may not be delayed because of a student's limited English proficiency. If the school suspects an EL has a disability, the school must evaluate the student quickly to determine whether the child is eligible for special education and related services under IDEA or regular or special education and related aids and services under Section 504.

- A student's limited English proficiency cannot be the reason for determining that a student has a disability.

- In conducting evaluations under IDEA or Section 504, schools must consider the English proficiency of ELs and determine appropriate assessments or other evaluation materials to be used.

- Under IDEA, schools must provide and administer assessments in the child's native language or another mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is not feasible to do so.

- Before your school can evaluate your child, IDEA requires that the school obtain the parent's written consent (agreement or permission).

- The IEP team must consider, among other special factors, the language needs of an EL student with a disability as those needs relate to the child's IEP. Therefore, the IEP team must include participants who have the requisite knowledge of the child's language needs. To ensure that EL children with disabilities receive services that meet their language and special education needs, members of the IEP team must include professionals with training, and preferably expertise, in second language acquisition and an understanding of how to differentiate between the student's limited English proficiency and the student's disability.

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[49] 34 C.F.R. § 104.35(a). EL students who may have a disability, like all other students who may have a disability and may require special education or related aids and services under Section 504 because of that disability, must be located, identified, and evaluated in a timely manner. 34 C.F.R. §§ 104.32 and 104.35(a)-(b). To avoid inappropriately identifying EL students as students with disabilities because of their limited English proficiency, an EL student must be evaluated in an appropriate language based on the student's needs and language skills. For additional information, see OCR and DOJ, *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents* (Jan. 7, 2015), www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf.

Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff

The following are sample, optional questions you may ask school staff about services for your child.

1. I was told that the school thinks my child needs special education services. Who can explain this to me?

2. I think my child needs special education services. How can my child be evaluated to determine if he or she has a disability?

3. How will my child receive services to meet his or her needs that also support his or her English language learning?

4. How will you make sure that my child gets the support they need in English language classes and core academic subjects?

Tips for Families

- With your written permission (consent), your school will evaluate your child to determine if they have a disability (such as a learning disability, a speech disability, or a vision or hearing disability) and need special education and related services because of that disability.

- If your child is found to be eligible for services under IDEA, you must give your written permission before your child can receive special education and related services for the first time. Once you give permission, your child's school district must ensure that a written plan called an individualized education program (IEP) is developed by the IEP team (which includes, among others, the child's parents, and school officials).

- The IEP is developed at an IEP team meeting that you must (under IDEA section 614(d)(1)(B)(i) and 34 C.F.R. § 300.322) be invited to attend along with certain school staff. The school must ensure that you understand what happens at the IEP team meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for you if you are not proficient in English or are deaf or hard of hearing.

- If your child is a student with a disability and is served under Section 504 and not IDEA, your school will typically develop a written Section 504 plan that explains the services your child should receive.

- Each state has a parent training and information center that helps parents of students with disabilities. See the website under Resources for more information.

Resources

There are nearly 100 **Parent Training and Information Centers** and Community Parent Resource Centers in the U.S. and territories.

These centers perform a variety of services for children and youth with disabilities as well as their families, professionals, and other organizations that support them. These services include:

- working with families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, from birth to age 26;

- helping parents participate in their child's education and development; and

- partnering with professionals and policymakers to improve outcomes for all children with disabilities.

Find the center in your area at the [Center for Parent Information & Resources](#).

The National Parent Teacher Association® (PTA) includes millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. Its website provides the Special Education Toolkit to educate families of children newly diagnosed with special needs on how to get the best services and resources available.

The goal of **Understood.org** is to help the millions of parents whose children, ages 3 through 20, are struggling with learning. They have many resources for families of students with learning issues. https://www.understood.org/. *This resource is available in English and Spanish.*

The **U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights** website provides more information about federal civil rights laws. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/know.html?src=ft. *This resource is available in numerous languages, including Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese.*

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). (2015). *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents.* Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf. This *Dear Colleague letter* reminds states, school districts, and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. More information about OCR, including how to file a complaint can be found at https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html. *This resource is available in numerous languages, including Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese.*