

What is the ELA Program?

The English Language Acquisition (ELA) Program is designed to teach students who speak languages other than English how to understand, speak, read and write in English. The program is also designed to help other students whose language skills are hindering their academic progress because a language other than English is spoken in the home. While students are learning English, they are also learning math, science and social studies. Teachers in the ELA Program are specifically trained to teach children who are learning English.

Why is a child being identified as an English language learner?

Children are identified as English language learners because their parents have said that they speak a language other than English and do not speak English well or at all. An objective assessment of the child's language skills in English also indicates that the child is not proficient in English. A student may also be identified as an English language learner if oral English is good, but reading and writing skills in English are not.

While students new to the district may be provisionally identified as English language learners, testing will be done to ensure this is accurate and consistent with parental wishes. Children do not receive services unless parents request services. The specific results of any testing used to measure English proficiency and academic achievement will be sent to the parents.

How does the Denver Public Schools teach English language learners?

In the Denver Public Schools, the ELA Program provides two methods of instruction for English language learners: Transitional Native Language Instruction (TNLI) and English as a Second Language (ESL). The goal of both methods is to provide English language learners with the English language skills they need to meaningfully participate in the District's regular mainstream English classes.

In a TNLI model, students receive initial content instruction in Spanish along with daily English Language Development instruction. Then students transition to supported content instruction in English along with daily English Language Development

instruction. Finally, when students have proved to be successful in reading, writing, listening and speaking English, they exit the ELA Program and receive regular mainstream English instruction.

In an ESL model, students receive supported content instruction in English along with daily English Language Development. When students have demonstrated success in reading, writing, listening and speaking English, they exit the ELA Program and receive regular mainstream English instruction.

How does the ELA Program meet the needs of English language learners?

Individual English language learners' needs are met through a variety of instructional methods. Based on parent choice, the particular needs of a student and the services available in the school, a student may receive any combination of native language instruction in Spanish, English Language Development instruction and supported English content instruction. Students participating in the ELA program receive the same curriculum (that is they are taught the same things) as children in mainstream English classes. The difference is that students in the Program have time specifically devoted to learning English. Also, instruction in other subjects takes into account that the students are only beginning to learn English.

How does the ELA Program specifically help students learn English and meet standards?

Through English Language Development instruction students will develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. This instruction begins as soon as students enter the Program. English language learners are expected to meet the same math, science and social studies standards as mainstream students in classes instructed in either supported English or Spanish. Teachers who are trained to use appropriate instructional strategies to make the curriculum accessible to English language learners instruct these classes.

How does the ELA Program meet the needs of disabled students?

English language learners may receive special education services and ELA program services at the same time. A multidisciplinary team reviews and

evaluates English language learners who are referred for special education evaluation. Based on the results of the evaluation, if the student has a disability as defined by federal and state law, the team will write and implement an individual plan that meets the student's unique needs.

How do English language learners exit the ELA Program?

English language learners exit from ELA program services when they have sufficient English skills to be successful in a mainstream English program. At each school, a team of teachers and a school administrator makes recommendations to exit students. These recommendations are based on an evaluation of a variety of factors including test scores, such as the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) and Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), as well as district assessments, standard based report cards, individual classroom assessments and the professional judgment of a student's teachers.

To be eligible for exit from ELA program services, a student must be overall proficient, as defined by CELA. Along with overall CELA proficiency, in grades K-12, a student must achieve at proficient or above on CELA Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. Along with CELA proficiency, a student must be partially proficient or above in reading and writing, in English, on tests administered as part of the CSAP. Students who are eligible for exit, as defined by CELA, and do not meet the remainder of the above criteria, may only be exited after a thorough portfolio review by the ISA Team. The portfolio review includes such documentation as informal classroom assessments, assignments, grades, progress reports, formal assessments, and attendance. All requests to exit students are reviewed by the ELA Department before a student is exited from program services.

After students are exited from ELA program services, their progress in regular English classes is monitored for two years to ensure that they have sufficient English skills to successfully participate in mainstream English classes.

Some students are exited within 1 year, while others stay in the program for more than 5 years. The average number of years that English language learners spend in the program is 3.7 years. After three continuous years, most students in the program are receiving all instruction in English. For English language learners in high school, approximately 50% of 9th graders graduate.

What if I want services that are not offered at my neighborhood school?

For eligible students, if no ELA services are offered at their neighborhood school, the District provides transportation to a designated school that offers ELA services. Eligible students who want ELA services not offered in a particular school may use the District's "Choice" process to apply to any Denver public school. For more information about the Choice process, contact the School of Choice Office at 720-423-3493.

What rights do parents have?

Parents have the right to choose whether or not their child participates in the ELA Program as well as the specific services their child receives. Not all services are available at every school.

Parents make these choices when they complete the Parent Permission Form. Parents also have the right to change their decision about their child's participation in the program at any time by completing a new Parent Permission Form. Individual schools assist parents in selecting among program options available at a school.

Schools with more than 20 English language learners have a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) chosen by the parents of these students. A districtwide (PAC) including representatives from ELA Program schools meets monthly to provide parent training opportunities as well as a forum for parents to express concerns regarding ELA program implementation districtwide.

What are the differences between the three options on the Parent Permission Form?

OPTION 1

Where Spanish services are available, Option 1 is for Spanish speaking students whose parents choose to have their child instructed in Spanish. If you choose Option 1, in the beginning, if your child does not know English, your child will be taught in Spanish while he or she begins to learn English right away. Spanish instruction is used as a tool to help your child learn English. When your child knows enough English, your child will move into all English classes where he or she will continue to receive additional help while learning reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Teachers who are trained to teach children who are learning English will teach your child. When your child can successfully read, write, listen and speak English, your child will move into regular English classes for reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

OPTION 2

If you choose Option 2, your child will be placed in all English classes with other students who are learning English. Your child will receive additional help while learning reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Teachers who are trained to teach children who are learning English will teach your child. When your child can successfully read, write, listen and speak English, your child will move into regular English classes for reading, writing, math, science and social studies.

OPTION 3

If you choose Option 3, your child will be placed in regular English classes for reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Your child will not receive help learning English or instruction in reading, writing, math, science and social studies from teachers specially trained to teach English language learners.

Who can I call if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the information contained in this brochure, including your rights as a parent, please contact your child's school or the Department of English Language Acquisition at 720-423-8155. Additional information about the ELA Program can be found at <http://ela.dpsk12.org>.

DPS English Language Acquisition Program

ELA

Parent Brochure



Denver Public Schools

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