

POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

It is a goal of the Cambridge School Committee to ensure that all Cambridge Public Schools students become literate in the English language while meeting high academic standards and preparing for higher education, employment, and engaged citizenship in the future. In furtherance of this goal, the School Committee adopts the policy of ensuring that the school district's system-wide programming for English Language Learners shall be aligned with the principles of high-quality programming; a partnership among Cambridge Public Schools, families, students, and the broader community; adherence to federal and state laws and regulations; and accountability for educational results while allowing for innovation and flexibility in the design and implementation of quality programming offered to English Language Learners by the Cambridge Public Schools.

The School Committee recognizes the importance of establishing an environment for second language learners that celebrates diversity and learning and that promotes purposeful interaction and authentic communication between and among students and adults in a classroom setting. The School Committee also recognizes the importance of using research, evaluation, and assessment in the development and implementation of bilingual and English language acquisition programs that are effective and evidence-based.

The Superintendent shall have the responsibility for ensuring that a comprehensive, system-wide plan for the education of English Language Learners is designed and implemented consistent with this policy and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Such plan shall address, without limitation, the assessment of students; student identification and program placement; family and community involvement; curriculum and instruction; student support services; faculty, staff and administration; facility, resources and materials; program plan and evaluation; and monitoring and recordkeeping.

Identification and Assessment of Students

The Superintendent, or designee, will establish criteria, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to identify students who are English Language Learners and formerly limited English proficient learners and such identification shall be based upon an individual determination and assessment.

ELL Programming

Unless a waiver is granted or the student is placed in a two-way bilingual program, or as otherwise provided by law, English Language Learners in grades 1-12 shall learn English in a sheltered English immersion program. It is recognized that some English Language Learners will reach a level of English proficiency that allows meaningful participation in Cambridge Public Schools' educational program before being mainstreamed into regular education programs.

English learners shall be provided with language support services until an individual determination based upon assessment data that indicates an intermediate level or above of English proficiency is made that the student no longer needs the services in order to participate meaningfully in the Cambridge Public Schools' educational program.

Parents/guardians of Kindergarten students may request placement in sheltered English immersion classrooms, English language mainstream classrooms with assistance of English language acquisitions, or two-way bilingual classrooms.

Parental Waivers

The Superintendent, or designee, will ensure criteria and procedures in accordance with applicable laws and regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, are in place for parental waivers. Such waivers shall be granted only where the parent or legal guardian annually applies for the waiver by visiting the school and providing written informed consent.

For students age 10 and older, waivers may be granted where it is the informed belief of the school principal and the educational staff that an alternate course of educational study would be better for the student's overall educational progress.

For students under 10, waivers may be granted only where (i) the student has been placed in an English language classroom for at least thirty (30) days in a given school year; (ii) the school principal and educational staff document in no less than two hundred fifty (250) words that the student has such special and individual physical or psychological needs, separate from the lack of English proficiency, that an alternative course of educational study would be better for the child's overall educational development; and (iii) authorizing signatures on the waiver application of both the Superintendent and the school principal.

Waiver decisions are subject to examination and approval by the Superintendent. The Superintendent may approve or reject a waiver decision, and the Superintendent's approval or rejection shall issue within five (5) days of receipt of the waiver application and any supporting documentation provided to, or requested by, the Superintendent.

Students receiving waivers may be transferred to bilingual programs or other programs employing generally recognized educational methodologies permitted by law for the education of English Language Learners.

The Superintendent, or designee, will ensure that schools in which twenty (20) students or more within a given grade level receive waivers, will offer a bilingual or other type of language support program or allow students with waivers to transfer to another Cambridge Public School in which such a program is offered.

Monitoring of Education Progress

To ensure the proper monitoring of educational progress of English Language Learners students in learning English and other academic subjects, the Superintendent, or designee, shall ensure the appropriate tests of English learners are administered at least annually as follows: (i) a standardized nationally-normed written test of academic subject matter given in English, which shall be administered to English learners in grades 2 and higher; and, (ii) a nationally-normed test of English proficiency in grades Kindergarten and higher, with such nationally-normed tests to be selected by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

In addition, the school district shall assess English learners' mastery of academic standards and curriculum framework on a regular basis.

Communications with Parents and Legal Guardians

Report cards and other school information shall be sent to parents and guardians of English Language Learners in the same manner and frequency as is sent to other parents and guardians and, to the maximum extent possible, in a language understandable to the parent and guardians.

LEGAL REF.: M. G. L. c. 71A, §1 et seq., Massachusetts' English Language Acquisition Law
603 C.M.R. 14.00 Massachusetts' Education of English Learners Regulations
Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq., 34 C.F.R. Part
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Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §1701 et seq.
Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. §6811 et seq.

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